MRS FALCHION

GILBERT PARKER

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MRS. FALCHION

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BY

GILBERT PARKER

AUTHOR OF

'PIERRE AND HIS PEOPLE' 'WHEN VALMOND CAME TO PONTIAC'

ETC. ETC

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TO

William Ernest Henley

WITH ADMIRATION AND REGARD

G. P.

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MRS. FALCHION.

BOOK I.

BELOW THE SUN LINE.

CHAPTER I.

THE GATES OF THE SEA.

THE part I played in Mrs. Falchion's career was not very noble, but I shall set it forth plainly here, else I could not have the boldness to write of her faults or those of others. Of my own history little need be said in preface. Soon after graduating with honours as a physician, I was offered a professional post in a college of medicine in Canada. It was difficult to establish a practice in medicine without some capital, else I had remained in London; and, being in need of instant means, I gladly accepted the offer. But

six months were to intervene before the beginning of my duties, — how to fill that time profitably was the question. I longed to travel, having scarcely been out of England during my life. Some one suggested the position of surgeon on one of the great steamers running between England and Australia. The idea of a long sea-voyage was seductive, for I had been suffering from over-study, though the position itself was not very distinguished. But in those days I cared more for pleasing myself than for what might become a newly-made professor, and I was prepared to say with a renowned Irish dean, — 'Dignity and I might be married, for all the relations we are.'

I secured the position with humiliating ease and humiliating smallness of pay. The steamer's name was the *Fulvia*. It was one of the largest belonging to the Occidental Company. It carried no emigrants, and had a passenger list of fashionable folks. On the voyage out to Australia the weather was pleasant, save in the Bay of Biscay; there was no sickness on board, and there were many opportunities for social gaiety, the cultivation of pleasant acquaintances, and the encouragement of that brisk idleness which aids to health. This was really the first holiday in my life, and I enjoyed it thoroughly. Nothing of unusual interest occurred

on the outward voyage; for one thing, because there were no unusual people among the passengers; for another, because the vessel behaved admirably. The same cannot be said of the return voyage: and with it my story really begins. Misfortune followed us out of Sydney harbour. We broke a crank-shaft between there and Port Phillip, Melbourne; a fire in the hold occurred at Adelaide; and at Albany we buried a passenger who had died of consumption one day out from King George's Sound. At Colombo, also, we had a misfortune, but it was of a peculiar kind, and did not obtrude itself at once; it was found in an addition to our passenger list. I had spent a day in exploring Colombo—visiting Arabi Pasha, inspecting Hindu temples, watching the jugglers and snake-charmers, evading guides and the sellers of brummagem jewellery, and idling in the Cinnamon Gardens. I returned to the ship tired out. After I had done some official duties, I sauntered to the gangway, and, leaning against the bulwarks, idly watched the passengers come on board from the tender. Two of these made an impression on me. One was a handsome and fashionably-dressed woman, who was followed by a maid or companion (as I fancied), carrying parcels; the other, a shabbily-dressed man, who was the last to come up from the tender. The woman

was going down the companion-way when he stepped on deck with a single bag in his hand, and I noticed that he watched her with a strange look in his eyes. He stood still as he gazed, and remained so for a moment after she had gone; then he seemed to recover himself, and started, as I thought, almost guiltily, when he saw that my attention was attracted. He nervously shifted his bag from one hand to the other, and looked round as though not certain of where he should go. A steward came to him officiously, and patronisingly too, — which is the bearing of servants to shabbily-dressed people,—but he shook his head, caught his bag smartly away from the steward's fingers, and moved towards the after part of the ship, reserved for intermediate passengers. As he went he hesitated, came to the side of the vessel, looked down at the tender for a moment, cast his eyes to where the anchor was being weighed, made as if he would go back to the tender, then, seeing that the ladder was now drawn up, sighed, and passed on to the second-class companion-way, through which he disappeared.

I stood commenting idly to myself upon this incident, which, slight though it was, appeared to have significance of a kind, when Hungerford, the fifth officer, caught me slyly by the arm and said:

'Lucky fellow! Nothing to do but watch the world go by. I wish I had you in the North Atlantic on a whaler, or in the No Man's Sea on a pearl-smack for a matter of thirty days.'

'What would come of that, Hungerford?' said I.

'An exchange of matter for mind, Marmion; muscle for meditation, physics for philosophy.'

'You do me too much honour; at present I've neither mind, meditation, nor philosophy; I am simply vegetating.'

'Which proves you to be demoralised. I never saw a surgeon on a ship who wasn't. They began with mind,—more or less,—they ate the fruits of indolence, got precious near being sinful as well as indolent, and ended with cheap cynicism, with the old *quid refert*,—the thing Hamlet plagiarised in his, "But it is no matter."'

'Isn't this an unusual occupation for you, Hungerford,—this Swift-like criticism?'

'Swift-like, is it? You see, I've practised on many of your race, Marmion, and I have it pat now. You are all of two classes—those who sicken in soul and leave after one trip, and those who make another trip and are lost.'

'Lost? How?'

Hungerford pressed his fingers hard on my

breast-bone, looked at me enigmatically from under his well-hung brows, and replied: 'Brains put out to seed, morals put out to vegetate — that's "lost."'

'What about fifth officers?'

'Fifth officers work like navvies, and haven't time for foolishness. They've got to walk the bridge, and practise the boats, and be responsible for luggage,—and here I am talking to you like an infallible undergraduate, while the Lascars are in endless confusion with a half-dozen pieces of baggage, and the first officer foams because I'm not there to set them right. I leave you to your dreams. Good-bye.'

Hungerford was younger than myself, but he knew the world, and I was flattered by these uncommon remarks, because he talked to no one else on the ship in the same way. He never sought to make friends, had a thorough contempt for social trifling, and shrugged his shoulders at the 'swagger' of some of the other officers. I think he longed for a different kind of sea-life, so accustomed had he been to adventurous and hardy ways. He had entered the Occidental service because he had fallen in love with a pretty girl, and thought it his duty to become a 'regular,' and thus have the chance of seeing her every three

months in London. He had conceived a liking for me, reciprocated on my part; the more so, because I knew that behind his blunt exterior there was a warm and manly heart. When he left me I went to my cabin and prepared for dinner, laughing as I did so at his keen, uncompromising criticism, which I knew was correct enough; for of all official posts that of a ship-surgeon is least calculated to make a man take a pride in existence. At its best, it is assisting in the movement of a panorama; at its worst, worse than a vegetation. Hungerford's solicitude for myself, however, was misplaced, because this one voyage would end my career as ship-surgeon, and, besides, I had not vegetated, but had been interested in everything that had occurred, humdrum as it was. With these thoughts, I looked out of the port-hole, to see the shores of Colombo, Galle Face, and Mount Lavinia fading in the distance, and heard seven bells — the time for dinner. When I took my seat at the table of which I was the head, my steward handed to me a slip of paper, saying that the chief steward had given a new passenger, a lady, the seat at my right hand, which had been vacated at Colombo. The name on the paper was, 'Mrs. Falchion.' The seat was still empty, and I wondered if this was the beautiful passenger who

had attracted me and interested the Intermediate Passenger. I was selfish enough to wish so: and it was so.

We had finished the soup before she entered. The chief steward, with that anxious civility which beauty can inspire in even so great a personage, conducted her to her seat beside me. I confess that though I was at once absorbed in this occurrence, I noticed also that some of the ladies present smiled significantly when they saw at whose table Mrs. Falchion was placed, and looked not a little ironically at the purser, who, as it was known, always tried to get for his table the newest addition to the passenger list—when it was a pretty woman. I believe that one or two rude people chaffed the chief steward about 'favouring the doctor;' but he had a habit of saying uncomfortable things in a deferential way, and they did not pursue the subject. Then they commiserated the purser, who was an unpleasant little Jew of an envious turn of mind; and he, as I was told, likened me to Sir John Falstaff. I was sensitive in those days, and this annoyed me, particularly that I had had nothing to do with placing Mrs. Falchion at my table. We are always most sensitive when guilty concerning the spirit and not the letter.

One who has lived the cosmopolitan life of

London should be quick at detecting nationalities, but I found it difficult, even after I heard her speak, to guess at Mrs. Falchion's native land. There were good reasons for this, as may be duly seen. Her appearance in the saloon caused an instant buzz of admiration and interest, of which she seemed oblivious. If it was acting, it was good acting; if it was lack of self-consciousness, it was remarkable. As I soon came to know, it was the latter—which, in such a woman, increased the remarkableness. I was inclined at first to venture the opinion that she was an actress; but I discovered that she possessed the attracting power of an actress without the mind or manners of one; her very lack of self-consciousness was proof of this emancipation.

When she sat down, I immediately welcomed her by name to my table. The only surprise she showed at my knowledge of her name and my self-introduction was to lift her head slightly and look at me, as if wondering whether I was likely to be an inquisitive and troublesome host; and also, as I thought, to measure me according to her measure. It was a quick look, and the interest she showed was of a passive kind. She asked me as she might an old acquaintance—or a waiter—if the soup was good, and what the fish was like

decided on my recommendation to wait for the *entrées;* requested her next neighbour to pass the olives; in an impersonal way began to talk about the disadvantages of life at sea; regretted that all ship food tasted alike; wondered if the cook knew how to make a decent salad; and added that the *menu* was a national compromise.

Now that she was close to me, I could see that her beauty was real and notable. Her features were regular, her eyes of a greyish violet, her chin strong, yet not too strong,—the chin of a singer; her hands had that charming quiet certainty of movement possessed by so few; and her colour was of the most delightful health. In this delightful health, in her bountiful yet perfect physical eloquence, her attractiveness, as it seemed to me, chiefly lay. For no one would ever have guessed her to possess an emotional temperament. All that was outer was fascinating, all that was inner suggested coldness. After experience assured me that all who came to know her shared this estimate, even in those days when every man on the ship was willing to be her slave. She had a compelling atmosphere, a possessive presence; and yet her mind at this time was unemotional—like Octavia, the wife of Mark Antony, 'of a cold conversation.' She was striking and unusual in appearance,

and yet well within convention and 'good form.' Her dress was simply and modestly worn, and had little touches of grace and taste which, I understand, many ladies on board sought to imitate when they recovered from the first feeling of envy.

She was an example of splendid life. I cared to look at her as one would dwell on the sleek beauty of a deer—as, indeed, I have many a time since then, in India, watched a tigress asleep on her chain, claws hidden, wild life latent but slumbering. I could have staked my life that Mrs. Falchion was insensible to love or passion, and unimpeachable in the broad scheme of right and wrong; imperious in requiring homage, incapable of giving it. I noticed when she laughed, as she did once at table, that her teeth were very white and small and square; and, like a schoolgirl, she had a habit of clicking them together very lightly, but not conspicuously, as if trying their quality. This suggested, however, something a little cruel. Her appetite was very good. She was coolly anxious about the amusements; she asked me if I could get her a list of the passengers, said that she was never sea-sick, and took a languid interest in the ladies present. Her glance at the men was keen at first, then neutral.

Once again, during the meal, she slowly turned and flashed an inquiring glance at me. I caught her eyes. She did not show the least embarrassment, and asked me if the band insisted on playing every day. Before she left the saloon, one could see that many present were talking about her. Even the grim old captain followed her with his eyes as she went. When she rose, I asked her if she was going on deck. I did it casually, as though it was her usual custom to appear there after dinner. In like fashion she replied that her maid had some unpacking to do, she had some things to superintend, and, when this was done, she intended to spend a time on deck. Then, with a peculiar smile, she passed out.

Note by Dr. Marmion appended to his MSS. :—'Many of the conversations and monologues in this history, not heard by myself when they occurred, were told to me afterwards, or got from the diaries and notes of the persons concerned. Only a few are purely imaginary.' G. P.

CHAPTER II.

'MOTLEY IS YOUR ONLY WEAR.'

I WENT to my cabin, took a book, sat down, and began to smoke. My thoughts drifted from the book, and then occurred a strange, incongruous thing. It was a remembered incident. It came like a vision as I was lighting a fresh cigar:—

A boy and a girl in a village chemist's shop; he with a boy's love for her, she responding in terms, but not in fact. He passed near her carrying a measure of sulphuric acid. She put out her hand suddenly and playfully, as if to bar his way. His foot slipped on the oily floor, and the acid spilled on his hands and the skirt of her dress. He turned instantly and plunged his hands into a measure of alcohol standing near, before the acid had more than slightly scalded them. She glanced at his startled face; hers was without emotion. She looked down, and said petulantly: 'You have spoiled my dress; I cannot go into the street.'

The boy's clothes were burnt also. He was poor, and to replace them must be a trial to him; her father owned the shop, and was well-to-do. Still, he grieved most that she should be annoyed, though he saw her injustice. But she turned away and left him.

Another scene then crossed the disc of smoke :—

The boy and girl, now man and woman, standing alone in the chemist's shop. He had come out of the big working world, after travel in many countries. His fame had come with him. She was to be married the next day to a seller of purple and fine linen. He was smiling a good-bye, and there was nothing of the old past in the smile. The flame now was in her eyes, and she put out both her hands to stop him as he turned to go; but his face was passionless. 'You have spoiled my heart,' she said; 'I cannot go into the world so.'

'It is too late; the measures are empty,' he replied.

'My hate, then, will follow you after to-morrow,' was the answer.

But he turned and left her, and she blindly stretched out her hands and followed him into the darkness, weeping.

Was it the scent of the chemicals in my cabin, coupled with some subterranean association of

things, that brought these scenes vividly before me at this moment? What had they to do with Mrs. Falchion?

A time came when the occurrence appeared to me in the light of prescience, but that was when I began to understand that all ideas, all reason and philosophy, are the result of outer impression. The primal language of our minds is in the concrete. Afterwards it becomes the cypher, and even at its highest it is expressed by angles, lines, and geometrical forms — substances and allusive shapes. But now, as the scene shifted by, I had involuntarily thrust forward my hands as did the girl when she passed out into the night, and, in doing so, touched the curtain of my cabin door swinging in towards me. I recovered myself, and a man timidly stepped inside, knocking as he did so. It was the Intermediate Passenger. His face was pale; he looked ill.

Poor as his dress was, I saw that he had known the influences and practised the graces of good society, though his manner was hesitating and anxious now. I knew at a glance that he was suffering from both physical pain and mental worry. Without a word, I took his wrist and felt his pulse, and he said: 'I thought I might venture to come——'

I motioned him not to speak. I counted the irregular pulse-beats, then listened to the action of his heart, with my ear to his breast. There lay his physical trouble. I poured out a dose of digitalis, and, handing it to him, asked him to sit down. As he sat and drank the medicine, I rapidly studied him. The chin was firm, and the eyes had a dogged, persistent look that, when turned on you, saw not you, but something beyond you. The head was thrown slightly forward, the eyes looking up at an angle. This last action was habitual with him. It gave him a peculiar earnestness. As I noted these peculiarities, my mind was also with his case; I saw that his life was threatened. Perhaps he guessed what was going on in me, for he said in a low, cultured voice: 'The wheels will stop too long some time, and there will be no rebound;' —referring to the irregular action of his heart.

'Perhaps that is true,' I said; 'yet it depends a good deal upon yourself when it will be. Men can die if they wish without committing suicide. Look at the Maori, the Tongan, the Malay. They can also prolong life (not indefinitely, but in a case like yours considerably), if they choose. You can lengthen your days if you do not brood on fatal things—fatal to you; if you do not worry yourself into the grave.'

I knew that something of this was platitude, and that counsel to such a man must be of a more possible cast, if it is to be followed. I was aware also that, in nine cases out of ten, worry is not a voluntary or constitutional thing, but springs from some extraneous cause. He smiled faintly, raised his head a little higher, and said: 'Yes, that's just it, I suppose; but then we do not order our own constitutions; and I believe, Doctor, that you must kill a nerve before it ceases to hurt. One doesn't choose to worry, I think, any more than one chooses to lay bare a nerve.' And then his eyes dropped, as if he thought he had already said too much.

Again I studied him, repeating my definitions in my mind. He was not a drunkard; he might have had no vice, so free was his face from any sign of dissipation or indulgence; but there was suffering, possibly the marks of some endured shame. The suffering and shadows showed the more because his features were refined enough for a woman. And altogether it struck me that he was possessed by some one idea, which gave his looks a kind of sorrowful eloquence, such as one sees on occasion in the face of a great actor like Salvini, on the forehead of a devout Buddhist, or in the eyes of a Jesuit missionary who martyrs himself in the wilds.

I felt at once for the man a sympathy, a brotherliness, the causes of which I should be at a loss to trace. Most people have this experience at one time or another in their lives. It is not a matter of sex; it may be between an old man and a little child, a great man and a labourer, a schoolgirl and an old negro woman. There is in such companionships less self-interest than in any other. As I have said, I thought that this man had a trouble, and I wished to know it; not from curiosity,—though my mind had a selfish, inquiring strain,—but because I hoped I might be able to help him in some way. I put my hand on his shoulder, and replied: 'You will never be better unless you get rid of your worry.'

He drew in a sharp breath, and said: 'I know that. I am afraid I shall never be better.'

There was a silence in which we looked at each other steadily, and then he added, with an intense but quiet misery, 'Never—never!'

At that he moved his hand across his forehead wearily, rose, and turned towards the door. He swayed as he did so, and would have fallen, but I caught him as he lost consciousness, and laid him on the cabin sofa. I chafed his hands, unloosed his collar, and opened the bosom of his shirt. As the linen dropped away from his throat,

a small portrait on ivory was exposed on his breast. I did not look closely at it then, but it struck me that the woman's head in the portrait was familiar, though the artistic work was not recent, and the fashion of the hair was of years before. When his eyes opened, and he felt his neck bare, he hurriedly put up his hand and drew the collar close, and at the same time sent a startled and inquiring look at me. After a few moments I helped him to his feet, and, thanking me more with a look than with words, he turned towards the door again.

'Wait,' I said, 'until I give you some medicine, and then you shall take my arm to your cabin.'

With a motion of the hand, signifying the uselessness of remedies, he sat down again. As I handed him the phial, I continued: 'I know that it is none of my business, but you are suffering.—To help your body, your mind should be helped also. Can't you tell me your trouble? Perhaps I should be able to serve you. I would if I could.'

It may be that I spoke with a little feeling and an apparent honesty; for his eyes searched mine in a kind of earnest bewilderment, as if this could not be true—as if, indeed, life had gone so hard with him that he had forgotten the way of kind-

ness. Then he stretched out his hand and said brokenly: 'I am grateful, believe me. I cannot tell you just now, but I will soon, perhaps.' His hand was upon the curtain of the door, when my steward's voice was heard outside, calling my name. The man himself entered immediately, and said that Mrs. Falchion sent her compliments, and would I come at once to see her companion, Miss Caron, who had hurt herself.

The Intermediate Passenger turned towards me a strange look; his lips opened as if about to speak, but he said nothing. At the instant there came to my mind whom the picture on his breast resembled: it was Mrs. Falchion.

I think he saw this new intelligence in my face, and a meaning smile took the place of words, as he slowly left the cabin, mutely refusing assistance.

I went to Mrs. Falchion's cabin, and met her outside the door. She looked displeased. 'Justine has hurt herself,' she said. 'Please attend to her; I am going on deck.'

The unfeeling nature of this remark held me to the spot for a moment; then I entered the cabin. Justine Caron, a delicate but warm-faced girl of little more than twenty, was sitting on the cabin sofa, her head supported against the wall, and her hand wound in a handkerchief soaked in blood.

Her dress and the floor were also stained. I undid the handkerchief and found an ugly wound in the palm of the hand. I called the steward, and sent him to my dispensary for some necessaries; then I asked her how it happened. At the moment I saw the cause—a broken bottle lying on the floor. 'The ship rolled,' she said. 'The bottle fell from the shelf upon the marble wash-stand, and, breaking, from there to the floor. Madame caught at my arm to save herself from falling; but I slipped, and was cut on the bottle—so.'

As she ended there was a knock, but the curtain was not drawn, and Mrs. Falchion's voice was heard. 'My dress is stained, Justine.'

The half-fainting girl weakly replied: 'I am very sorry, madame, indeed.'

To this Mrs. Falchion rejoined: 'When you have been attended to, you may go to bed, Justine. I shall not want you again to-night. But I shall change my dress. It is so unpleasant; I hate blood. I hope you will be well in the morning.'

To this Justine replied: 'Ah, madame, I am sorry. I could not help it; but I shall be quite well in the morning, I am sure.' Then she added quietly to me: 'The poor madame! She will not see suffering. She hates pain. Sickness

troubles her. Shall I be able to use my hand very soon, monsieur?'

There was a wistful look in her eyes, and guessing why it was there, I said: 'Yes, soon, I hope,—in a few days, no doubt.'

Her face lighted up, and she said: 'Madame likes about her people who are happy and well.' Then, as if she might have said too much, she hurriedly added: 'But she is very kind;' and, stooping down quickly, her face whitening with the effort, she caught up the broken glass and threw it through the port-hole into the sea.

A half-hour later I went on deck, and found Mrs. Falchion comfortably seated in her deck-chair. I brought a stool over, and sat down beside her. To this hour the quickness with which I got upon friendly terms with her astonishes me.

'Justine is better?' she said, and her hand made a slight motion of disgust.

'Yes. She was not dangerously hurt, of course.'

'Let us change the subject, please. They are going to have a fancy-dress ball on board, I believe, before we get to Aden. How tiresome! Isn't it a little affectation on the part of the stage-struck committee? Isn't it—inconsequent?'

'That depends,' I said vaguely, inviting a question. She idled with a book in her lap.

On what?'

'On those who go, what costumes are worn, and how much beauty and art appear.'

'But the trouble! Does it pay? What return does one get?'

'If all admire, hali are envious, some are jealous, and one is devoted—isn't that enough?' I think I was a fool that night.

'You seem to understand women,' she said, with a puzzling and not quite satisfactory smile. 'Yes, all that is something.'

Though I was looking at the sea rather than at her, I saw again that inquiring look in her eyes,—such a measuring look as a recruiting sergeant might give a victim of the Queen's shilling.

After a moment's pause she continued, I thought, abstractedly: 'As what should you go?'

I answered lightly and without premeditation,—'As Caius Cassius. Why should you not appear as Portia?'

She lifted her eyebrows at me.

'As Portia?'

'As Portia, the wife of Brutus,' I blundered on, at the same time receiving her permission, by a nod, to light my cigar.

'The pious, love-sick wife of Brutus!' This in a

disdainful tone, and the white teeth clicked softly together.

'Yes, a good disguise,' I said banteringly, though I fancy somewhat tentatively also, and certainly with a touch of rudeness. I was thinking at that moment of the Intermediate Passenger, and I was curious.

'And you think of going in the disguise of a gentleman? Caius Cassius was that, wasn't he?' she retorted in an ironical tone.

'I suppose he was, though he was punished once for rudeness,' I replied apologetically.

'Quite so,' was the decisive reply.

I felt that she was perfectly cool, while I was a little confused, and ashamed too, that I had attempted to be playfully satirical. And so, wondering what I should say next, I remarked in desperation, 'Do you like the sea?'

'I am never ill at sea,' was her reply. 'But I do not really like it; it is treacherous. The land would satisfy me if——' She paused.

'Yes, Mrs. Falchion,—"if"?'

If I did not wish to travel,' she vaguely added, looking blandly at me.

'You have travelled much?' I ventured.

'A great deal;' and again I saw that scrutiny in her eyes. It occurred to me at the moment that

she might think I possessed some previous knowledge of her.

My mind became occupied again with the Intermediate Passenger and the portrait that he wore at his neck. I almost laughed to think of the melodramatic turn which my first conversation with this woman might chance to take. I felt that I was dealing with one who was able to meet cleverly any advance of mine, but I determined to lead the talk into as deep waters as possible.

'I suppose, too, you are a good practical sailor—that is, you understand seamanship, if you have travelled much?' I do not know why I said that, for it sounded foolish to me afterwards.

'Pretty well,' she replied. 'I can manage a sail; I know the *argot*, I could tell the shrouds from the bulwarks, and I've rowed a boat in a choppy sea.'

'It is not an accomplishment usual to your sex.'

'It was ordinary enough where I spent the early part of my life,' was the idle reply; and she settled herself more comfortably in her chair.

'Yes? May I ask where that was?' and as I said this, it occurred to me that she was, perhaps, leading me on, instead of my leading her; to betray me as to anything I knew about her.

'In the South Seas,' she replied. 'My father was a British consul in the Islands.'

You have not come from the Islands now, I suppose?'

'No,' she said a little more softly; 'it is years since I was in Samoa. . . . My father is buried there.'

'You must have found it a romantic life in those half-barbaric places?'

She shifted in her chair. 'Romantic!' Her tone conveyed a very slight uneasiness and vagueness. 'I am afraid you must ask some one else about that sort of thing. I did not see much romance, but I saw plenty that was half-barbaric.' Here she laughed slightly.

Just then I saw the lights of a vessel far off. 'See, a vessel!' I said; and I watched the lights in silence, but thinking. I saw that she too was watching idly. At length, as if continuing the conversation, I said: 'Yes, I suppose life must be somewhat adventurous and dangerous among savage people like the Samoans, Tongans, and Fijians?'

'Indeed, then,' she replied decisively, 'you are not to suppose anything of the kind. The danger is not alone for the white people.'

At this I appeared, as I really was, interested, and begged her to explain what she meant. She thought a moment, and then briefly, but clearly,

sketched the life of those islands, showing how, in spite of missionary labour selfish and unselfish, the native became the victim of civilisation, the prey of the white trader and beachcomber, who were protected by men-of-war with convincing Nordenfeldt and Hotchkiss guns; how the stalwart force of barbaric existence declined, and with it the crude sense of justice, the practice of communism at its simplest and purest, the valour of nationality. These phrases are my own — the substance, not the fashion, of her speech.

'You do not, then,' I said, 'believe wholly in the unselfishness of missionaries, the fair dealing of traders, the perfect impartiality of justice, as shown through steel-clad cruisers?'

'I have seen too much to be quite fair in judgment, I fear, even to men-of-war's men;' and she paused, listening to a song which came from the after-part of the ship. The air was very still, and a few of the words of the droll, plaintive ditty came to us.

Quartermaster Stone, as he passed us, hummed it, and some voices of the first-class passengers near joined in the refrain—

'Sing, hey, for a rover on the sea,
And the old world!'

Some days later I got all of the song from one

of the intermediate passengers, and the last verse of it I give here—

'I'm a-sailing, I'm a-sailing on the sea,
To a harbour where the wind is still;
Oh, my dearie, do you wait for me?
Oh, my dearie, do you love me still?
Sing, hey, for a rover on the sea,
And the old world!'

I noticed that Mrs. Falchion's brow contracted as the song proceeded, making a deep vertical line between the eyes, and that the fingers of the hand nearest me closed on the chair-arm firmly. The hand attracted me. It was long, the fingers were shapely, but not markedly tapering, and suggested firmness. I remarked afterwards, when I chanced to shake hands with her, that her fingers enclosed one's hand; it was not a mere touch or pressure, but an unemotional and possessive clasp. I felt sure that she had heard the song before, else it had not produced even this so slight effect on her nerves. I said: 'It is a quaint song. I suppose you are familiar with it and all of its kind?'

'I fancy I have heard it somewhere,' she answered in a cold voice.

I am aware that my next question was not justified by our very short acquaintance; but this acquaintance had been singular from its beginning,

and it did not seem at that moment as it looks on paper; besides, I had the Intermediate Passenger in my mind. 'Perhaps your husband is a naval man?' I asked.

A faint flush passed over her face, and then, looking at me with a neutral expression and some reserve of manner, she replied: 'My husband was not a naval man.'

She said '*was not.*' That implied his death. There was no trouble in her manner; I could detect no sign of excitement. I turned to look at the lights of the approaching vessel, and there, leaning against the railing that divided the two decks, was the Intermediate Passenger. He was looking at us intently. A moment after he disappeared. Beyond doubt there was some intimate association between these two.

My thoughts were, however, distracted by our vessel signalling the other. Hungerford was passing just then, and I said: 'Have you any idea what vessel it is, Hungerford?'

'Yes, man-of-war *Porcupine*, bound for Aden, I think.'

Mrs. Falchion at this laughed strangely, as she leaned forward looking, and then, rising quickly, said: 'I prefer to walk.'

'May I accompany you?' I asked.

She inclined her head, and we joined the promenaders.

The band was playing, and, for a ship-band, playing very well, the ballet music of Délibes' *Sylvia.* The musicians had caught that unaccentuated and sensuous swing of the melody which the soft, tropical atmosphere rendered still more languorous. With Mrs. Falchion's hand upon my arm, I felt a sense of capitulation to the music and to her, uncanny in its suddenness. At this distance of time it seems to me absurd. I had once experienced something of the same feeling with the hand of a young medical student, who, skilled in thought-reading, discovered the number of a bank-note that was in my mind.

This woman had an attractiveness compelling and delightful, at least in its earlier application to me. Both professionally and socially I have been brought into contact with women of beauty and grace, but never one who, like Mrs. Falchion, being beautiful, seemed so unconscious of the fact, so indifferent to those about her, so untouched by another's emotion, so lacking in sensitiveness of heart; and who still drew people to her. I am speaking now of the earlier portion of our acquaintance; of her as she was up to this period in her life.

I was not alone in this opinion of her, for, as time went on, every presentable man and woman on the boat was introduced to her; and if some women criticised and some disliked her, all acknowledged her talent and her imperial attraction. Among the men her name was never spoken but with reserve and respect, and her afternoon teas were like a little court. She had no compromising tenderness of manner for man or woman; she ruled, yet was unapproachable through any avenues of sentiment. She had a quiet *aplomb*, which would be called *sang-froid* in a man.

'Did you ever see a Spanish-Mexican woman dance?' she said in one of the pauses of the music.

'Never: never any good dancing, save what one gets at a London theatre.'

'That is graceful,' she said, 'but not dancing. You have heard of music stirring the blood; of savage races — and others — working themselves up to ecstatic fury? Maybe you have seen the Dervishes, or the Fijians, or the Australian aboriginals? No? Well, I have, and I have seen—which is so much more—those Spanish-Mexican women dance. Did you ever see anything so thrilling, so splendid, that you felt you must possess it?'—She asked me that with her

hand upon my arm!—'Well, that is it. I have felt that way towards a horse which has won a great race, and to a woman who has carried me with her through the fantastic drama of her dance, until she stood at the climax, head thrown back, face glowing—a statue. It is grand to be eloquent like that, not in words, but in person.'

In this was the key to her own nature. Body and mind she was free from ordinary morbidness, unless her dislike of all suffering was morbid. With her this was a dislike of any shock to the senses. She was selfish at all points.

These conclusions were pursued at the expense of speech on my part. At first she did not appear to regard my silence. She seemed to have thoughts of her own; but she shook them off with a little firm motion of the shoulders, and, with the assumption of a demureness of manner and an airy petulance, said: 'Well, amuse me.'

'Amuse you?' was my reply. 'Delighted to do so if I can. How?'

'Talk to me,' was the quick response.

'Would that accomplish the purpose?' This in a tone of mock protest.

'Please don't be foolish, Dr. Marmion. I dislike having to explain. Tell me things.'

'About what?'

'Oh, about yourself—about people you have met, and all that; for I suppose you have seen a good deal and lived a good deal.'

'About hospital cases?' I said a little maliciously

'No, please, no! I abhor everything that is sick and poor and miserable.'

'Well,' said I, at idle venture, 'if not a hospital, what about a gaol?'

I felt the hand on my arm twitch slightly, and then her reply came.

'I said I hated everything that was wretched and wicked. You are either dense, or purposely irritating.'

'Well, then, a college?'

'A college? Yes, that sounds better. But I do not wish descriptions of being "gated," or "sent down," or "ploughed," and that kind of commonplace. I should prefer, unless your vanity leads you irresistibly in *that* direction, something with mature life and amusement; or, at least, life and incident, and good sport—if you do not dwell on the horrors of killing.'

On the instant there came to me the remembrance of Professor Valiant's wife. I think it was not what she wanted; but I had a purpose, and I began:—

'Every one at St. Luke's admired and respected

Professor Valiant's wife, she was so frank and cordial and prettily downright. In our rooms we all called her a good chap, and a dashed good chap when her husband happened to be rustier than usual. He was our professor in science. It was the general belief that he chose science for his life-work because it gave unusual opportunities for torture. He was believed to be a devoted vivisectionist; he certainly had methods of cruelty, masterly in their ingenuity. He could make a whole class raw with punishment in a few words; and many a scorching bit of Latin verse was written about his hooked nose and fishy eye.

'But his highest talents in this direction were reserved for his wife. His distorted idea of his own importance made him view her as a chattel, an inferior being; the more so, I believe, because she brought him little money when he married her. She was too much the woman to pretend to kneel to him, and because she would not be his slave, she had a hard time of it. He began by insisting that she should learn science, that she might assist him in his experiments. She knew that she had no taste for it, that it was no part of her wifely duty, and she did what suited her better—followed the hounds. It was a picture

to see her riding across country. She could take a fence with a sound hunter like a bird. And so it happened that, after a time, they went their own ways pretty well; he ignoring her, neglecting her, deprecating her by manner, if not by speech, and making her life more than uncomfortable.

'She was always kind to me. I was the youngest chap in the college, and was known as "Marmy" by every one; and because I was fonder of science than most other men in the different years, Valiant was more gracious to me than the rest, though I did not like him. One day, when I called, I heard her say to him, not knowing that I was near,—"Whatever you feel, or however you act towards me in private, I *will* have respect when others are present."

'It was the custom for the professors to invite each student to luncheon or dinner once during term-time. Being somewhat of a favourite of both Professor and Mrs. Valiant however, I lunched with them often. I need hardly say that I should not have exceeded the regulation once had it not been for Mrs. Valiant. The last time I went is as clear in my memory as if it were yesterday. Valiant was more satirical and cold-blooded than usual. I noticed a kind of shining hardness in his wife's eyes, which gave me a strange feeling; yet

she was talkative and even gay, I thought, while I more than once clenched my fist under the table, so much did I want to pummel him; for I was a lover of hers, in a deferential, boyish way.

'At last, knowing that she liked the hunt, I asked her if she was going to the meet on the following Saturday, saying that I intended to follow, having been offered a horse. With a steely ring to her voice, and a further brightening of the eyes, she said: "You are a stout little sportsman, Marmy. Yes, I am going on Major Karney's big horse, Carbine."

'Valiant looked up, half sneering, half doubtful, I thought, and rejoined: "Carbine is a valuable horse, and the fences are stiff in the Garston country."

'She smiled gravely, then, with her eyes fixed on her husband, said: "Carbine is a perfect gentleman. He will do what I ask him. I have ridden him."

'"The devil you have!" he replied.

'"I am sure," said I, as I hoped, bravely, and not a little enthusiastically, "that Carbine would take any fence you asked him."

'"Or not, as the case might be. Thank you, Marmy, for the compliment," said she.

'"A Triton among minnows," remarked Valiant, not entirely under his breath; "horses obey, and

students admire, and there is no end to her greatness."

'"There is an end to everything, Edward," she remarked a shade sadly and quietly.

'He turned to me and said: "Science is a great study, Marmion, but it is sardonic too; for you shall find that when you reduce even a Triton to its original elements——"

'"Oh, please let me finish," she interrupted softly. "I know the lecture so well. It reads this way: *The place of generation must break to give place to the generated; but the influence spreads out beyond the fragments, and is greater thus than in the mass —neither matter nor mind can be destroyed. The earth was molten before it became cold rock and quiet world.* There, you see, Marmy, that I am a fellow-student of yours."

'Valiant's eyes were ugly to watch; for she had quoted from a lecture of his, delivered to us that week. After an instant he said, with slow maliciousness: "Oh, ye gods, render me worthy of this Portia, and teach her to do as Brutus's Portia did, *ad eternum!*"

'She shuddered a little, then said very graciously, and as if he had meant nothing but kindness: "'Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks.' I will leave you now to your cigarettes; and

because I must go out soon, and shall not, I fear, see you again this afternoon, good-bye, Marmy, till Saturday—till Saturday." And she left us.

'I was white and trembling with anger. He smiled coolly, and was careful to choose me one of his best cigars, saying as he handed it: "Conversation is a science, Marmion. Study it; there is solid satisfaction in it; it is the only art that brings instant pleasure. Like the stage, it gets its immediate applause."

'Well, Mrs. Valiant did ride Carbine on that Saturday. Such a scene it was! I see it now—the mottled plump of hounds upon the scent, the bright sun showing up the scarlet coats of the whips gloriously, the long stride of the hunters, ears back and quarters down! She rode Carbine, and the fences *were* stiff—so stiff that I couldn't have taken half of them. Afterwards I was not sorry that I couldn't; for she rode for a fall that day on Carbine, her own horse,—she had bought him of Major Karney a few days before,—and I heard her last words as she lay beside him, smiling through the dreadful whiteness of her lips. "Good-bye, Marmy," she whispered. "Carbine and I go together. It is better so, in the full cry and a big field. Tell the men at Luke's that I hope they will pass at the coming exams. . . . I am going up—

for my final—Marmy.—I wonder—if I'll—pass." And then the words froze on her lips.

'It was persecution that did it—diabolical persecution and selfishness. That was the worst day the college ever knew. At the funeral, when the provost read, "*For that it hath pleased Thee to deliver this our sister out of the miseries of this sinful world*," Big Wallington, the wildest chap among the grads, led off with a gulp in his throat, and we all followed. And that gold-spectacled sneak stood there, with a lying white handkerchief at his eyes!

'I laid myself out to make the college too hot for him. In a week I had every man in the place with me, and things came to such a pass that all of us must be sent down, or Valiant resign. He resigned. He found another professorship; but the thing followed him, and he was obliged to leave the country.'

When I finished the story, Mrs. Falchion was silent for a time, then, with a slight air of surprise, and in a quite critical way, she said: 'I should think you would act very well, if you used less emotion. Mrs. Valiant had a kind of courage, but she was foolish to die. She should have stayed and fought him—fought him every way, until she was his master. She could have done it; she was

clever, I should think. Still, if she had to die, it was better to go with a good horse that way. I think I should prefer to go swiftly, suddenly, but without the horror of blood and bruises, and that sort of thing. . . . I should like to meet Professor Valiant. He was hard, but he was able too. . . . But haven't we had enough of horror? I asked you to amuse me, and you have merely interested me instead. Oh!——'

This exclamation, I thought, was caused by the voice of the quartermaster humming—

> 'I'm a-sailing, I'm a-sailing on the sea,
> To a harbour where the wind is still'——

Almost immediately she said: 'I think I will go below.' Then, after a slight pause,—'This is a liberal acquaintance for one day, Dr. Marmion; and, you know, we were not introduced.'

'No, Mrs. Falchion, we were not introduced; but I am in some regards your host, and I fear we should all be very silent if we waited for regular introductions here. The acquaintance gives me pleasure, but it is not nearly so liberal as I hope it may become.'

She did not answer, but smiled at me over her shoulder as she passed down the staircase, and the next instant I could have bitten my tongue for

playing the cavalier as I had done; for showing, as I think I did, that she had an influence over me—an influence peculiar to herself, and difficult to account for when not in her presence.

I sat down, lit a cigar, and went over in my mind all that had been said between us; all that had occurred in my cabin after dinner; every minute since we left Colombo was laid bare to its minutest detail. Lascars slipped by me in the half-darkness, the voices of two lovers near alternated with their expressive silences, and from the music saloon there came the pretty strains of a minuet, played very deftly. Under the influence of this music my thoughts became less exact; they drifted. My eyes shifted to the lights of the *Porcupine* in the distance, and from them again to the figures passing and repassing me on the deck. The 'All's well' of the lookout seemed to come from an endless distance; the *swish* of water against the dividing hull of the *Fulvia* sounded like a call to silence from another world; the phosphorescence swimming through the jarred waters added to the sensation of unreality and dreams. These dreams grew, till they were broken by a hand placed on my shoulder, and I saw that one of the passengers, Clovelly, an English novelist, had dropped out from the promenade to talk

with me. He saw my mood, however, and said quietly,—'Give me a light for my cigar, will you? Then, astride this stool, I'll help you to make inventory of the rest of them. A pretty study; for, at our best, "What fools we mortals be!"'

'"Motley is your only wear,"' was my reply; and for a full half-hour, which, even for a man, is considerable, we spoke no word, but only nodded when some one of the promenaders noticed us. There was a bookmaker fresh from the Melbourne races; an American, Colonel Ryder, whose eloquence had carried him round the world; a stalwart squatter from Queensland; a pretty widow, who had left her husband under the sods of Tasmania; a brace of girls going to join their lovers and be married in England; a few officers fleeing from India with their livers and their lives; a family of four lanky lasses travelling 'home' to school; a row of affable ladies, who alternated between envy and gaiety and delight in, and criticism of, their husbands; a couple of missionaries, preparing to give us lectures on the infamous gods of the heathen,—gods which, poor harmless little creatures! might be bought at a few annas a pint at Aden or Colombo,—and on the Exodus and the Pharaohs—pleasures reserved for the Red Sea; a commercial traveller, who

arranged theatricals, and cast himself for all the principal parts; a humorous and naïve person who industriously hinted at the opulence of his estates in Ireland; two stately English ladies of title; a cheerful array of colonial knights and judges off to Europe for a holiday; and many others, who made little worlds unto themselves, called *cliques* by blunt people.

'To my mind, the most interesting persons on the ship,' said Clovelly at last, 'are the book-maker, Miss Treherne, and the lady with whom you have just been talking — an exceptional type.'

'An unusual woman, I fancy,' was my reply. 'But which is Miss Treherne? I am afraid I am not quite sure.'

He described her and her father, with whom I had talked — a London Q.C., travelling for his health, a notable man with a taste for science, who spent his idle hours in reading astronomy and the plays of Euripides.

'Why not include the father in the list of the most interesting persons?' I questioned.

'Because I have met many men like him, but no one quite like his daughter, or Mrs.——What is her name?'

'Mrs. Falchion.'

'Or Mrs. Falchion or the bookmaker.'

'What is there so uncommon about Miss Treherne? She had not struck me as being remarkable.'

'No? Well, of course, she is not striking after the fashion of Mrs. Falchion. But watch her, study her, and you will find her to be the perfection of a type—the finest expression of a decorous convention, a perfect product of social conservatism; unaffected, cheerful, sensitive, composed, very talented, altogether companionable.'

'Excuse me,' I said, laughing, though I was impressed; 'that sounds as if you had been writing about her, and applying to her the novelist's system of analysis, which makes an imperfect individual a perfect type. Now, frankly, are you speaking of Miss Treherne, or of some one of whom she is the outline, as it were?'

Clovelly turned and looked at me steadily. 'When you consider a patient,' he said, 'do you arrange a diagnosis of a type or of a person?—And, by the way, "type" is a priggish word.'

'I consider the type in connection with the person.'

'Exactly. The person is the thing. That clears up the matter of business and art. But now, as to Miss Treherne: I want to say that, having

been admitted to her acquaintance and that of her father, I have thought of them only as friends, and not as "characters" or "copy."'

'I beg your pardon, Clovelly,' said I. 'I might have known.'

'Now, to prove how magnanimous I am, I shall introduce you to Miss Treherne, if you will let me. You've met her father, I suppose?' he added, and tossed his cigar overboard.

'Yes, I have talked with him. He is a courteous and able man, I should think.'

We rose. Presently he continued: 'See, Miss Treherne is sitting there with the Tasmanian widow—what is *her* name?'

'Mrs. Callendar,' I replied. 'Blackburn, the Queenslander, is joining them.'

'So much the better,' he said. 'Come on.'

As we passed the music saloon, we paused for an instant to look through the port-hole at a pale-faced girl with big eyes and a wonderful bright red dress, singing 'The Angels' Serenade,' while an excitable bear-leader turned her music for her. Near her stood a lanky girl who adored actors and tenors, and lived in the hope of meeting some of those gentlemen of the footlights, who plough their way so calmly through the hearts of maidens fresh from school.

We drew back to go on towards Miss Treherne, when Hungerford touched me on the arm, and said: 'I want to see you for a little while, Marmion, if Mr. Clovelly will excuse you.'

I saw by Hungerford's face that he had something of importance to say, and, linking my arm in his, I went with him to his cabin, which was near those of the intermediate passengers.

CHAPTER III.

A TALE OF NO MAN'S SEA.

INSIDE the cabin Hungerford closed the door, gripped me by the arm, and then handed me a cheroot, with the remark: 'My pater gave them to me last voyage home. Have kept 'em in tea.' And then he added, with no appearance of consecutiveness, — 'Hang the bally ship, anyhow!'

I shall not attempt to tone down the crudeness of Hungerford's language. It contents me to think that the solidity of his character and his worth will appear even through the crust of free-and-easy idioms, as they will certainly be seen in his acts; — he was sound at heart and true as steel.

'What is the matter, Hungerford?' I asked lighting the cheroot.

'Everything's the matter. Captain, with his nose in the air, and trusting all round to his

officers. First officer, no good—never any use since they poured the coal on him. Purser, ought to be on a Chinese junk. Second, third, fourth officers, first-rate chaps, but so-so sailors. Doctor frivolling with a lovely filly, pedigree not known. Why, confound it! nobody takes this business seriously except the captain, and he sits on a golden throne. He doesn't know that in any real danger this swagger craft would be filled with foolishness. There isn't more than one good boat's crew on board—sailors, Lascars, stewards, and all. As for the officers, if the surgeon would leave the lovely ladies to themselves, he'd find cases worth treating, and duties worth doing. He should keep himself fit for shocks. And he can take my word for it—for I've been at sea since I was a kid, worse luck!—that a man with anything to do on a ship ought to travel every day nose out for shipwreck next day, and so on, port to port. Ship-surgeons, as well as all other officers, weren't ordained to follow after cambric skirts and lace handkerchiefs at sea. Believe me or not as you like, but, for a man having work to do, woman, lovely woman, is rocks. Now, I suppose you'll think I'm insolent, for I'm younger than you are, Marmion, but you know what a rough-and-tumble fellow I am, and you'll not mind.'

'Well, Hungerford,' I said, 'to what does this lead?'

'To Number 116 Intermediate, for one thing It's letting off steam for another. I tell you, Marmion, these big ships are too big. There are those canvas boats. They won't work; you can't get them together. You couldn't launch one in an hour. And as for the use of the others, the Lascars would melt like snow in any real danger. There's about one decent boat's crew on the ship, that's all. There! I've unburdened myself; I feel better.'

Presently he added, with a shake of the head: 'See here: now-a-days we trust too much to machinery and chance, and not enough to skill of hand and brain stuff. I'd like to show you some of the crews I've had in the Pacific and the China Sea—but I'm at it again! I'll now come, Marmion, to the real reason why I brought you here. . . . Number 116 Intermediate is under the weather; I found him fainting in the passage. I helped him into his cabin. He said he'd been to you to get medicine, and you'd given him some. Now, the strange part of the business is, I know him. He didn't remember me, however—perhaps because he didn't get a good look at me. Coincidence is a strange thing. I can point to a dozen

in my short life, every one as remarkable, if not as startling, as this. Here, I'll spin you a yarn :—

'It happened four years ago. I had no moustache then, was fat like a whale, and first mate on the *Dancing Kate*, a pearler in the Indian Ocean, between Java and Australia. That was sailing, mind you,—real seamanship, no bally nonsense; a fight every weather, interesting all round. If it wasn't a deadly calm, it was a typhoon; if it wasn't either, it was want of food and water. I've seen us with pearls on board worth a thousand quid, and not a drop of water nor three square meals in the camboose. But that was life for men and not Miss Nancys. If they weren't saints, they were sailors, afraid of nothing but God Almighty,—and they do respect Him, even when they curse the winds and the sea. Well, one day we were lying in the open sea, about two hundred and fifty miles from Port Darwin. There wasn't a breath of air. The sea was like glass; the sun was drawing turpentine out of every inch of the *Dancing Kate.* The world was one wild blister. There wasn't a comfortable spot in the craft, and all round us was that staring, oily sea. It was too hot to smoke, and I used to make a Sede boy do my smoking for me. I got the benefit of the

smell without any work. I was lying under the droop of a dingey, making the Sede boy call on all his gods for wind, with interludes of smoke, when he chucked his deities and tobacco, and, pointing, shouted: "Man! man!'

'I snatched a spy-glass. Sure enough, there was a boat on the water. It was moving ever so slowly. It seemed to stop, and we saw something lifted and waved, and then all was still again. I got a boat's crew together, and away we went in that deadly smother. An hour's row, and we got within hail of the derelict,—as one of the crew said, "feelin' as if the immortal life was jerked out of us." The dingey lay there on the glassy surface, not a sign of life about her. Yet I had, as I said, seen something waved. The water didn't even lap its sides. It was ghostly, I can tell you. Our oars licked the water; they didn't attack it. Now, I'm going to tell you something, Marmion, that'll make you laugh. I don't think I've got any poetry in me, but just then I thought of some verses I learned when I was a little cove at Wellington—a devilishly weird thing. It came to me at that moment like a word in my ear. It made me feel awkward for a second. All sailors are superstitious, you know. I'm superstitious about this ship. Never mind; I'll tell you the verses, to show you what a

queer thing memory is. The thing was called "No Man's Sea":—

"The days are dead in the No Man's Sea,
And God has left it alone;
The angels cover their heads and flee,
And the wild four winds have flown.

"There's never a ripple upon the tide,
There's never a word or sound;
But over the waste the white wraiths glide,
To look for the souls of the drowned.

"The No Man's Sea is a gaol of souls,
And its gate is a burning sun,
And deep beneath it a great bell tolls
For a death that never is done.

"Alas! for any that comes anear,
That lies on its moveless breast;
The grumbling water shall be his bier,
And never a place of rest."

'There are four of the verses. Well, I made a motion to stop the rowing, and was mum for a minute. The men got nervous. They looked at the boat in front of us, and then turned round, as though to see if the *Dancing Kate* was still in sight. I spoke, and they got more courage. I stood up in the boat, but could see nothing in the dingey. I gave a sign to go on, and soon we were alongside. In the bottom of the dingey lay a man, apparently dead, wearing the clothes of a convict. One of the

crew gave a grunt of disgust, the others said nothing. I don't take to men often, and to convicts precious seldom; but there was a look in this man's face which the prison clothes couldn't demoralise —a damned pathetic look, which seemed to say, "Not guilty."

'In a minute I was beside him, and found he wasn't dead. Brandy brought him round a little; but he was a bit gone in the head, and muttered all the way back to the ship. I had unbuttoned his shirt, and I saw on his breast a little ivory portrait of a woman. I didn't let the crew see it; for the fellow, even in his delirium, appeared to know I had exposed the thing, and drew the linen close in his fingers, and for a long time held it at his throat.'

'What was the woman's face like, Hungerford?' I asked.

He parried, remarking only that she had the face of a lady, and was handsome.

I pressed him. 'But did it resemble any one you had ever seen?'

With a slight droop of his eyelids, he said: 'Don't ask foolish questions, Marmion.—Well, the castaway had a hard pull for life. He wouldn't have lived at all, if a breeze hadn't come up and let us get away to the coast. It was the beginning

of the monsoon, and we went bowling down towards Port Darwin, a crowd of Malay *proas* in our wake. However, the poor beggar thought he was going to die, and one night he told me his story. He was an escaped convict from Freemantle, Western Australia. He had, with others, been taken up to the northern coast to do some Government work, and had escaped in the dingey. His crime was stealing funds belonging to a Squatting and Mining Company. There was this extenuating circumstance: he could have replaced the money, which, as he said, he'd only intended to use for a few weeks. But a personal enemy threw suspicion on him, accounts were examined, and though he showed he'd only used the money while more of his own was on the way to him, the Company insisted on prosecuting him. For two reasons: because it was itself in bad odour, and hoped by this trial to divert public attention from its own dirty position; and because he had against him not only his personal enemy, but those who wanted to hit the Company through him. He'd filched to be able to meet the large expenses of his wife's establishment. Into this he didn't enter minutely, and he didn't blame her for having so big a *ménage*; he only said he was sorry that he hadn't been able to support it without having to

come, even for a day, to the stupidity of stealing. After two years he escaped. He asked me to write a letter to his wife, which he'd dictate. Marmion, you or I couldn't have dictated that letter if we'd taken a year to do it. There was no religion in it, no poppy-cock, but straightforward talk, full of sorrow for what he'd done, and for the disgrace he'd brought on her. I remember the last few sentences as if I'd seen them yesterday. "I am dying on the open sea, disgraced, but free," he said. "I am not innocent in act, but I was not guilty of intentional wrong. I did what I did that you should have all you wished, all you ought to have. I ask but this—and I shall soon ask for nothing—that you will have a kind thought, now and then, for the man who always loved you, and loves you yet. I have never blamed you that you did not come near me in my trouble; but I wish you were here for a moment before I go away for ever. You must forgive me now, for you will be free. If I were a better man I would say, God bless you. In my last conscious moments I will think of you, and speak your name. And now good-bye—an everlasting good-bye! I was your loving husband, and am your lover until death." And it was signed, "Boyd Madras."

'However, he didn't die. Between the captain

and myself, we kept life in him, and at last landed him at Port Darwin; all of us, officers and crew, swearing to let no one know he was a convict. And I'll say this for the crew of the *Dancing Kate* that, so far as I know, they kept their word. That letter, addressed in care of a firm of Melbourne bankers, I gave back to him before we landed. We made him up a purse of fifty pounds,—for the crew had got to like him,—and left him at Port Darwin, sailing away again in a few days to another pearl-field farther east. What happened to him at Port Darwin and elsewhere, I don't know; but one day I found him on a fashionable steamer in the Indian Ocean, looking almost as near to Kingdom Come as when he starved in the dingey on No Man's Sea. As I said before, I think he didn't recognise me; and he's lying now in 116 Intermediate, with a look on him that I've seen in the face of a man condemned to death by the devils of cholera or equatorial fever. And that's the story, Marmion, which I brought you to hear—told, as you notice, in fine classical style.'

'And why do you tell *me* this, Hungerford?—a secret you've kept all these years. Knowledge of that man's crime wasn't necessary before giving him belladonna or a hot bath.'

Hungerford kept back the whole truth for

reasons of his own. He said: 'Chiefly because I want you to take a decent interest in the chap. He looks as if he might go off on the long voyage any tick o' the clock. You are doctor, parson, and everything else of the kind on board. I like the poor devil, but I'm not in a position to be going around with ginger-tea in a spoon, or Ecclesiastes under my arm—very good things, anyhow. Your profession has more or less to do with the mind as well as the body, and you may take my word for it that Boyd Madras's mind is as sick as his torso. By the way, he calls himself "Charles Boyd," so I suppose we needn't recall to him his former experiences by adding the "Madras."'

Hungerford squeezed my arm again violently, and added,—'Look here, Marmion, we understand each other in this, don't we?—To do what we can for the fellow, and be mum.'

Some of this looks rough and blunt, but as it was spoken there was that in it which softened it to my ear. I knew he had told all he thought I ought to know, and that he wished me to question him no more, nor to refer to Mrs. Falchion, whose relationship to Boyd Madras—or Charles Boyd—both of us suspected.

'It was funny about those verses coming to my mind, wasn't it, Marmion?' he continued. And he

began to repeat one of them, keeping time to the wave-like metre with his cheroot, winding up with a quick, circular movement, and putting it again between his lips—

> 'There's never a ripple upon the tide,
> There's never a breath or sound;
> But over the waste the white wraiths glide,
> To look for the souls of the drowned.'

Then he jumped off the berth where he had been sitting, put on his jacket, said it was time to take his turn on the bridge, and prepared to go out, having apparently dismissed Number 116 Intermediate from his mind.

I went to Charles Boyd's cabin, and knocked gently. There was no response. I entered. He lay sleeping soundly—the sleep that comes after nervous exhaustion. I had a good chance to study him as he lay there. The face was sensitive and well fashioned, but not strong; the hands were delicate, yet firmly made. One hand was clenched upon that portion of his breast where the portrait hung.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TRAIL OF THE ISHMAELITE.

I WENT on deck again, and found Clovelly in the smoking-room. The bookmaker was engaged in telling tales of the turf, alternated with comic songs by Blackburn—an occupation which lasted throughout the voyage, and was associated with electric appeals to the steward to fill the flowing bowl. Clovelly came with me, and we joined Miss Treherne and her father. Mr. Treherne introduced me to his daughter, and Clovelly amiably drew the father into a discussion of communism as found in the South Sea Islands.

I do not think my conversation with Miss Treherne was brilliant. She has since told me that I appeared self-conscious and preoccupied. This being no compliment to her, I was treated accordingly. I could have endorsed Clovelly's estimate of her so far as her reserve and sedateness were concerned. It seemed impossible to talk naturally.

The events of the day were interrupting the ordinary run of thought, and I felt at a miserable disadvantage. I saw, however, that the girl was gifted and clear of mind, and possessed of great physical charm, but of that fine sort which must be seen in suitable surroundings to be properly appreciated. Here on board ship a sweet gravity and a proud decorum—not altogether unnecessary—prevented her from being seen at once to the best advantage. Even at this moment I respected her the more for it, and was not surprised, nor exactly displeased, that she adroitly drew her father and Clovelly into the conversation. With Clovelly she seemed to find immediate ground for naïve and pleasant talk; on his part, deferential, original, and attentive; on hers, easy, allusive, and warmed with piquant humour. I admired her; saw how cleverly Clovelly was making the most of her; guessed at the solicitude, studious care, and affection of her bringing-up; watched the fond pleasure of the father as he listened; and was angry with myself that Mrs. Falchion's voice rang in my ears at the same moment as hers. But it did ring there, and the real value of that smart tournament of ideas was partially lost to me.

The next morning I went to Boyd Madras's cabin. He welcomed me gratefully, and said that

he was much better; as he seemed; but he carried a hectic flush, such as comes to a consumptive person. I said little to him beyond what was necessary for the discussion of his case. I cautioned him about any unusual exertion, and was about to leave, when an impulse came to me, and I returned and said,—'You will not let me help you in any other way?'

'Yes,' he answered; 'I shall be very glad of your help, but not just yet. And, Doctor, believe me, I think medicines can do very little. Though I am thankful to you for visiting me, you need not take the trouble, unless I am worse, and then I will send a steward to you, or go to you myself.'

What lay behind this request, unless it was sensitiveness, I could not tell; but I determined to take my own course, and to visit him when I thought fit.

Still, I saw him but once or twice on the after-deck in the succeeding days. He evidently wished to keep out of sight as much as possible. I am ashamed to say there was a kind of satisfaction in this to me; for, when a man's wife—and I believed she was Boyd Madras's wife—hangs on your arm, and he himself is denied that privilege, and fares poorly beside her sumptuousness, and lives as a stranger to her; you can scarcely regard his

presence with pleasure. And from the sheer force of circumstances, as it seemed to me then, Mrs. Falchion's hand was often on my arm; and her voice was always in my ear at meal-times and when I visited Justine Caron to attend to her wound, or joined in the chattering recreations of the music saloon. It was impossible not to feel her influence; and if I did not yield entirely to it, I was more possessed by it than I was aware. I was inquisitive to know beyond doubt that she was the wife of this man. I think it was in my mind at the time that, perhaps, by being with her much, I should be able to do him a service. But there came a time when I was sufficiently undeceived. It was all a game of misery in which some one stood to lose all round. Who was it: she, or I, or the refugee of misfortune, Number 116 Intermediate? She seemed safe enough. He or I should suffer in the crash of penalties.

It was a strange situation. I, the acquaintance of a day, was welcome within the circle of this woman's favour—though it was an unemotional favour on her side; he, the husband, as I believed, though only half the length of the ship away, was as distant from her as the north star. When I sat with her on deck at night, I seemed to feel Boyd Madras's face looking at me from the half-darkness

of the after-deck; and Mrs. Falchion, whose keen eyes missed little, remarked once on my gaze in that direction. Thereafter I was more careful, but the idea haunted me. Yet I was not the only person who sat with her. Other men paid her attentive court. The difference was, however, that with me she assumed ever so delicate, yet palpable, an air of proprietorship, none the less alluring because there was no heart in it. So far as the other passengers were concerned, there was nothing jarring to propriety in our companionship. They did not know of Number 116 Intermediate. She had been announced as a widow; and she had told Mrs. Callendar that her father's brother, who, years before, had gone to California, had died within the past two years and left her his property; and, because all Californians are supposed to be millionaires, her wealth was counted fabulous. She was going now to England, and from there to California in the following year. People said that Dr. Marmion knew on which side his bread was buttered. They may have said more unpleasant things, but I did not hear them, or of them.

All the time I was conscious of a kind of dishonour, and perhaps it was that which prompted me (I had fallen away from my intention of visiting him freely) to send my steward to see how Boyd

Madras came on, rather than go myself. I was, however, conscious that the position could not—should not—be maintained long. The practical outcome of this knowledge was not tardy. A new influence came into my life which was to affect it permanently: but not without a struggle.

A series of concerts and lectures had been arranged for the voyage, and the fancy-dress ball was to close the first part of the journey—that is, at Aden. One night a concert was on in the music saloon. I had just come from seeing a couple of passengers who had been suffering from the heat, and was debating whether to find Mrs. Falchion, who, I knew, was on the other side of the deck, go in to the concert, or join Colonel Ryder and Clovelly, who had asked me to come to the smoking-room when I could. I am afraid I was balancing heavily in favour of Mrs. Falchion, when I heard a voice that was new to me, singing a song I had known years before, when life was ardent, and love first came—halcyon days in country lanes, in lilac thickets, of pleasant Hertfordshire, where our footsteps met a small bombardment of bursting seed-pods of the furze, along the green common that sloped to the village. I thought of all this, and of *her* everlasting quiet.

With a different voice the words of the song would have sent me out of hearing; now I stood rooted to the spot, as the notes floated out past me to the nervelessness of the Indian Ocean, every one of them a commandment from behind the curtain of a sanctuary.

The voice was a warm, full contralto of exquisite culture. It suggested depths of rich sound behind, from which the singer, if she chose, might draw, until the room and the deck and the sea ached with sweetness. I scarcely dared to look in to see who it was, lest I should find it a dream. I stood with my head turned away towards the dusky ocean. When, at last, with the closing notes of the song, I went to the port-hole and looked in, I saw that the singer was Miss Treherne. There was an abstracted look in her eyes as she raised them, and she seemed unconscious of the applause following the last chords of the accompaniment. She stood up, folding the music as she did so, and unconsciously raised her eyes towards the port-hole where I was. Her glance caught mine, and instantly a change passed over her face. The effect of the song upon her was broken; she flushed slightly, and, as I thought, with faint annoyance. I know of nothing so little complimentary to a singer as the audience

that patronisingly listens outside a room or window —not bound by any sense of duty as an audience, — between whom and the artists an unnatural barrier is raised. But I have reason to think now that Belle Treherne was not wholly moved by annoyance—that she had seen something unusual, maybe oppressive, in my look. She turned to her father. He adjusted his glasses as if, in his pride, to see her better. Then he fondly took her arm, and they left the room.

Then I saw Mrs. Falchion's face at the port-hole opposite. Her eyes were on me. An instant before, I had intended following Miss Treherne and her father; now some spirit of defiance, some unaccountable revolution, took possession of me, so that I flashed back to her a warm recognition. I could not have believed it possible, if it had been told of me, that, one minute affected by beautiful and sacred remembrances, the next I should be yielding to the unimpassioned tyranny of a woman who could never be anything but a stumbling-block and an evil influence. I had yet to learn that in times of mental and moral struggle the mixed fighting forces in us resolve themselves into two cohesive powers, and strive for mastery; that no past thought or act goes for nothing at such a time, but creeps out from the darkness

where we thought it had gone for ever, and does battle with its kind against the common foe. There moved before my sight three women: one, sweet and unsubstantial, wistful and mute and very young, not of the earth earthy; one, lissom, grave, with gracious body and warm abstracted eyes, all delicacy, strength, reserve; the other and last, daring, cold, beautiful, with irresistible charm, silent and compelling. And these are the three women who have influenced my life, who fought in me then for mastery; one from out the unchangeable past, the others in the tangible and delible present. Most of us have to pass through such ordeals before character and conviction receive their final bias; before human nature has its wild trouble, and then settles into 'cold rock and quiet world;' which any lesser after-shocks may modify, but cannot radically change.

I tried to think. I felt that to be wholly a man I should turn from those eyes drawing me on. I recalled the words of Clovelly, who had said to me that afternoon, half laughingly, — 'Dr. Marmion, I wonder how many of us wish ourselves transported permanently to that time when we didn't know champagne from *alter feiner madeira* or dry hock from sweet sauterne; when a pretty

face made us feel ready to abjure all the sinful lusts of the flesh and become inheritors of the kingdom of heaven? Egad! I should like to feel it once again. But how can we, when we have been intoxicated with many things; when we are drunk with success and experience; have hung on the fringe of unrighteousness; and know the world backwards, and ourselves mercilessly?'

Was I, like the drunkard, coming surely to the time when I could no longer say yes to my wisdom, or no to my weakness? I knew that, an hour before, in filling a phial with medicine, I found I was doing it mechanically, and had to begin over again, making an effort to keep my mind to my task. I think it is an axiom that no man can properly perform the business of life who indulges in emotional preoccupation.

These thoughts, which take so long to write, passed then through my mind swiftly; but her eyes were on me with a peculiar and confident insistence—and I yielded. On my way to her I met Clovelly and Colonel Ryder. Hungerford was walking between them. Colonel Ryder said: 'I've been saving that story for you, Doctor; better come and get it while it's hot.'

This was a promised tale of the taking of Mobile in the American Civil War.

At any other time the invitation would have pleased me mightily; for, apart from the other two, Hungerford's brusque and original conversation was always a pleasure—so were his cheroots; but now I was under an influence selfish in its source. At the same time I felt that Hungerford was storing up some acute criticism of me, and that he might let me hear it any moment. I knew, numbering the order of his duties, that he could have but a very short time to spare for gossip at this juncture, yet I said that I could not join them for half an hour or so. Hungerford had a fashion of looking at me searchingly from under his heavy brows, and I saw that he did so now with impatience, perhaps contempt. I was certain that he longed to thrash me. That was his idea of punishment and penalty. He linked his arm in those of the other two men, and they moved on, Colonel Ryder saying that he would keep the story till I came and would wait in the smoking-room for me.

The concert was still on when I sat down beside Mrs. Falchion. 'You seemed to enjoy Miss Treherne's singing?' she said cordially enough, as she folded her hands in her lap.

'Yes, I thought it beautiful. Did not you?'

'Pretty, most pretty; and admirable in technique

and tone; but she has too much feeling to be really artistic. She felt the thing, instead of pretending to feel it—which makes all the difference. She belongs to a race of delightful women, who never do any harm, whom everybody calls good, and who are very severe on those who do not pretend to be good. Still, all of that pleasant race will read their husband's letters and smuggle. They have no civic virtues. Yet they would be shocked to bathe on the beach without a machine,—as American women do,—and they look for a new fall of Jerusalem when one of their sex smokes a cigarette after dinner. Now, I do not smoke cigarettes after dinner, so I can speak freely. But, at the same time, I do not smuggle, and I do bathe on the beach without a machine—when I am in a land where there are no sharks and no *taboo*. If morally consumptive people were given a few years in the South Seas, where they could not get away from nature, there would be more strength and less scandal in society.'

I laughed. 'There is a frank note for Mr. Clovelly, who thinks he knows the world and my sex thoroughly. He says as much in his books. — Have you read his *A Sweet Apocalypse*? He said more than as much to me. But he knows a mere nothing about women—their

amusing inconsistencies; their infidelity in little things and fidelity in big things; their self-torturings; their inability to comprehend themselves; their periods of religious insanity; their occasional revolts against the restraints of a woman's position, known only to themselves in their dark hours;—ah, really, Dr. Marmion, he is ignorant, I assure you. He has only got two or three kinds of women in his mind, and the representatives of these fooled him, as far as he went with them, to their hearts' content. Believe me, there is no one quite so foolish as the professional student of character. He sees things with a glamour; he is impressionable; he immediately begins to make a woman what he wishes her to be for his book, not what she is; and women laugh at him when they read his books, or pity him if they know him personally. I venture to say that I could make Mr. Clovelly use me in a novel—not *A Sweet Apocalypse*—as a placid lover of fancy bazaars and Dorcas societies, instead of a very practical person, who has seen life without the romantic eye, and knows as well the working of a buccaneering craft — through consular papers and magisterial trials, of course —as of a colonial Government House. But it is not worth while trying to make him falsify

my character.—Besides, you are here to amuse me.'

This speech, as she made it, was pleasantly audacious and clever. I laughed, and made a gesture of mock dissent, and she added: 'Now I have finished my lecture. Please tie my shoe-lace there, and then, as I said, amuse me. Oh, you can, if you choose! You are clever, when you like to be. Only, this time, do not let it be a professor's wife who foolishly destroys herself, and cuts short what might have been a brilliant career.'

On the instant I determined to probe deeper into her life, and try her nerve, by telling a story with enough likeness to her own (if she was the wife of Boyd Madras) to affect her acutely; though I was not sure I could succeed. A woman who triumphs over sea-sickness, whom steam from the boilers never affects, nor the propeller-screw disturbs, has little to fear from the words of a man who is neither adroit, eloquent, nor dramatic. However, I determined to try what I could do. I said: 'I fancy you would like something in the line of adventure; but my career has not run in that direction, so I shall resort to less exciting fields, and, I fear, also, a not very cheerful subject.'

'Oh, never mind!' said she. 'What you wish, so long as it is not conventional and hackneyed

But I know you will not be prosy, so go on, please.'

'Well,' I began, 'once, in the hospital, I attended a man—Anson was his name,—who, when he thought he was going to die, confided to me his life's secret. I liked the man; he was good-looking, amiable, but hopelessly melancholy. He was dying as much from trouble as disease. No counsel or encouragement had any effect upon him; he did, as I have seen so many do,—he resigned himself to the out-going tide. Well, for the secret. He had been a felon. His crime had been committed through ministering to his wife's vanity.'

Here I paused. I felt Mrs. Falchion's eyes searching me. I raised mine steadily to hers with an impersonal glance, and saw that she had not changed colour in the least. But her eyes were busy. I proceeded: 'When he was disgraced she did not come near him. When he went to her, after he was released' (here I thought it best to depart from any close resemblance to Mrs. Falchion's own story), 'and was admitted to her, she treated him as an absolute stranger—as one who had intruded, and might be violent. She said that she and her maid were alone in the house, and hinted that he had come to

disturb them. She bade him go, or she must herself go. He called her by his own name, and begged her, by the memory of their dead child, to speak kindly to him. She said he was quite mistaken in her name,—that she was Mrs. Glave, not Mrs. Anson,—and again insisted that he should go. He left her, and at last, broken-hearted, found his way, in illness and poverty, to the hospital, where, towards the last, he was cared for by a noble girl, a companion of his boyhood and his better days, who urged his wife to visit him. She left him alone, said unpleasant things to the girl, did not come to see her husband when he was dead, and provided nothing for his burial. You see that, like you, she hated suffering and misery—and criminals. The girl and her mother paid the expenses of the funeral, and, with myself, were the only mourners. I am doubtful if the wife knows even where he lies. I admit that the story looks melodramatic; but truth is more drama than comedy, I fancy. Now, what do you think of it all, Mrs. Falchion?'

I had felt her shrink a little at the earlier part of my story, as if she feared that her own tale was to be brutally bared before her; but that soon passed, and she languidly tapped the chair-arm as the narrative continued. When it was finished,

she leaned over slightly, and with these same fingers tapped my arm. I thrilled involuntarily.

'He died, did he?' she said. 'That was the most graceful thing he could do. So far as my knowledge of the world is concerned, men of his class do *not* die. They live, and they never rise above their degradation. They had not brains or courage enough to keep them out of gaol, and they have not pluck or brains enough to succeed—afterwards. Your friend Anson was quite gentlemanly in his action at the last. He had some sense of the fitness of things. He could not find a place in the world without making other people uncomfortable, and causing trouble. If he had lived, he would always have added to the blight on his wife's career, and have been an arrow—not a thorn—in her side. Very likely he would have created a scandal for the good young girl who nursed him. He made the false step, and compelled society to reject him. It did not want to do so; it never does. It is long-suffering; it tries not to see and acknowledge things until the culprit himself forces it to take action. Then it says: "Now you have openly and inconsiderately broken our bond of mutual forbearance. You make me send you away. Go, then, behind stone walls, and please do not come to me again. If you

do, you will only be a troublesome ghost. You will cause awkwardness and distress." So, *Mr* Anson—I must be polite to *him*—did the most reasonable and proper thing. He disappeared from the play before it actually became tragedy. There was no tragedy in his death,—death is a magnificent ally; it untangles knots. The tragedy was in his living—in the perpetual ruin of his wife's life, renewed every morning. He disappeared. Then the play became drama, with only a little shadow of tragedy behind it. Now, frankly, am I not right?'

'Mrs. Falchion,' I said, 'your argument is clever, but it is only incidentally true. You draw life, society and men no more correctly than the author of *A Sweet Apocalypse* would draw you. The social law you sketch, when reduced to its bare elements, is remorseless. It does not provide for repentance, for restitution, for recovering a lost paradise. It makes an act final, a sin irrevocable.'

'Well, since we are beginning to talk like a couple of books by a pair of priggish philosophers, I might as well say that I think sin *is* final so far as the domestic and social machinery of the world is concerned. What his religious belief requires of a man is one thing, what his fellow-men

require of him is another. The world says, You shall have latitude enough to swing in freely, but you must keep within the code. As soon as you break the law openly, and set the machinery of public penalty in motion, there is an end of you, so far as this world is concerned. You may live on, but you have been broken on the wheel, and broken you always will be. It is not a question of right or wrong, of kindness or cruelty, but of general expediency and inevitableness. To all effect, Mr. Anson was dead before he breathed his last. He died when he passed within the walls of a gaol—condemned for theft.'

There was singular scorn in her last few words, and, dissent as I did from her merciless theories, I was astonished at her adroitness and downrightness—enchanted by the glow of her face. To this hour, knowing all her life as I do, I can only regard her as a splendid achievement of nature, convincing even when at the most awkward tangents with the general sense and the straitest interpretation of life; convincing even in those other and later incidents, which showed her to be acting not so much by impulse as by the law of her nature. Her emotions were apparently rationalised at birth—to be derationalised and broken up by a power greater than herself before

her life had worked itself out. I had counted her clever; I had not reckoned with her powers of reasoning. Influenced as I was by emotion when in her presence, I resorted to a personal application of my opinions — the last and most unfair resort of a disputant. I said I would rather be Anson dead than Mrs. Anson living; I would rather be the active than the passive sinner; the victim, than a part of that great and cruel machine of penalty.

'The passive sinner!' she replied. 'Why, what wrong did she do?'

The highest moral conceptions worked dully in her. Yet she seemed then, as she always appeared to be, free from any action that should set the machine of penalty going against herself. She was inexorable, but she had never, knowingly, so much as slashed the hem of the moral code.

'It was to give his wife pleasure that Anson made the false step,' I urged.

'Do you think she would have had the pleasure at the price? The man was vain and selfish to run any risk, to do anything that might endanger her safety—that is, her happiness and comfort.'

'But suppose he knew that she loved ease and pleasure?—that he feared her anger or disdain if he did not minister to her luxuries?'

'Then he ought not to have married that kind of a woman.' The hardness in her voice was matched at that moment by the coldness of her face.

'That is begging the question,' I replied. 'What would such a selfish woman do in such a case, if her pleasure could not be gratified?'

'You must ask that kind of woman,' was her ironical answer.

I rashly felt that her castle of strength was crumbling. I ventured farther.

'I have done so.'

She turned slightly towards me, yet not nervously, as I had expected. 'What did she say?'

'*She declined to answer directly.*'

There was a pause, in which I felt her eyes searching my face. I fear I must have learned dissimulation well; for, after a minute, I looked at her, and saw, from the absence of any curious anxiety, that I had betrayed nothing. She looked me straight in the eyes and said: 'Dr. Marmion, a man must not expect to be forgiven, who has brought shame on a woman.'

'Not even when he has repented and atoned?'

'Atoned! How mad you are! How can there be atonement? You cannot wipe things out—on earth. We are of the earth. Records remain. If a man plays the fool, the coward, and the

criminal, he must expect to wear the fool's cap, the white feather, and the leg-chain until his life's end. And now, please, let us change the subject. We have been bookish long enough.' She rose with a gesture of impatience.

I did not rise. 'Pardon me, Mrs. Falchion,' I urged, 'but this interests me so. I have thought much of Anson lately. Please, let us talk a little longer. Do sit down.'

She sat down again with an air of concession rather than of pleasure.

'I am interested,' I said, 'in looking at this question from a woman's standpoint. You see, I am apt to side with the miserable fellow who made a false step—foolish, if you like—all for love of a selfish and beautiful woman.'

'She was beautiful?'

'Yes, as you are.' She did not blush at that rank compliment, any more than a lioness would, if you praised the astonishing sleekness and beauty of its skin.

'And she had been a true wife to him before that?'

'Yes, in all that concerned the code.'

'Well?—Well, was not that enough? She did what she could, as long as she could.' She leaned far back in the chair, her eyes half shut.

'Don't you think—as a woman, not as a theorist—that Mrs. Anson might at least have come to him when he was dying?'

'It would only be uncomfortable for her. She had no part in his life; she could not feel with him. She could do nothing.'

'But suppose she had loved him? By that memory, then, of the time when they took each other for better or for worse, until death should part them?'

'Death did part them when the code banished him; when he passed from a free world into a cage. Besides, we are talking about people marrying, not about their loving.'

'I will admit,' I said, with a little raw irony, 'that I was not exact in definition.'

Here I got a glimpse into her nature which rendered after events not so marvellous to me as they might seem to others. She thought a moment quite indolently, and then continued: 'You make one moralise like George Eliot. Marriage is a condition, but love must be an action. The one is a contract, the other is complete possession, a principle — that is, if it exists at all;—I do not know.'

She turned the rings round mechanically on her finger; and among them was a wedding-ring!

Her voice had become low and abstracted, and now she seemed to have forgotten my presence, and was looking out upon the humming darkness round us, through which now and again there rang a boatswain's whistle, or the loud laugh of Blackburn, telling of a joyous hour in the smoking-room.

I am now about to record an act of madness, of folly, on my part. I suppose most men have such moments of temptation, but I suppose, also, that they act more sensibly and honourably than I did then. Her hand had dropped gently on the chair-arm, near to my own, and though our fingers did not touch, I felt mine thrilled and impelled towards hers. I do not seek to palliate my action. Though the man I believed to be her husband was below, I yielded myself to an imagined passion for her. In that moment I was a captive. I caught her hand and kissed it hotly.

'But you might know what love is,' I said. 'You might learn—learn of me. You——'

She abruptly and with surprise withdrew her hand, and, without any visible emotion save a quicker pulsation of her breast, which might have been indignation, spoke: 'But even if I might learn, Dr. Marmion, be sure that neither your college nor Heaven gave you the knowledge to

instruct me. . . . There: pardon me, if I speak harshly; but this is most inconsiderate of you, most impulsive — and compromising. You are capable of singular contrasts. Please let us be friends, friends simply. You are too interesting for a lover, really you are.'

Her words were a cold shock to my emotion—my superficial emotion; though, indeed, for that moment she seemed adorable to me. Without any apparent relevancy, but certainly because my thoughts in self-reproach were hovering about cabin 116 Intermediate, I said, with a biting shame, —'I do not wonder now!'

'You do not wonder at what?' she questioned; and she laid her hand kindly on my arm.

I put the hand away a little childishly, and replied, 'At men going to the devil.' But this was not what I thought.

'That does not sound complimentary to somebody. May I ask you what you mean?' she said calmly.

'I mean that Anson loved his wife, and she did not love him; yet she held him like a slave, torturing him at the same time.'

'Does it not strike you that this is irrelevant? You are not my husband—not my slave. But, to be less personal, Mr. Anson's wife was not responsible

for his loving her. Love, as I take it, is a voluntary thing. It pleased him to love her — he would not have done it if it did not please him; probably his love was an inconvenient thing domestically— if he had no tact.'

'Of that,' I said, 'neither you nor I can know with any certainty. But, to be scriptural, she reaped where she had not sowed, and gathered where she had not strawed. If she did not make the man love her,—I believe she did, as I believe you would, perhaps unconsciously, do,—she used his love, and was therefore better able to make all other men admire her.' She was richer in personal power for that experience; but she was not grateful for it nor for his devotion.'

'You mean, in fact, that I—for you make the personal application—shall be better able henceforth to win men's love, because—ah, surely, Dr. Marmion, you do not dignify this impulse, this foolishness of yours, by the name of love!' and she smiled a little satirically at the fingers I had kissed.

I was humiliated, and annoyed with her and with myself, though, down in my mind, I knew that she was right. 'I mean,' said I, 'that I can understand how men have committed suicide because of just such things. My wonder is that

Anson, poor devil! did not do it.' I knew I was talking foolishly.

'He hadn't the courage, my dear sir. He was gentlemanly enough to die, but not to be heroic to that extent. For it does need a strong dash of heroism to take one's own life. As I conceive it, suicide would have been the best thing for him when he sinned against the code. The world would have pitied him then, would have said,—He spared us the trial of punishing him. But to pay the vulgar penalty of prison—ah!' She shuddered, and then almost coldly continued: 'Suicide is an act of importance; it shows that a man recognises, at least, the worthlessness of his life. He does one dramatic and powerful thing; he has an instant of great courage, and all is over. If it had been a duel in which, of intention, he would fire wide, and his assailant would fire to kill, so much the better; so much the more would the world pity. But either is superior, as a final situation, than death with a broken heart,—I suppose that is possible?—and disgrace, in a hospital.'

'You seem to think only of the present, only of the code and the world; and as if there were no heroism in a man living down his shame, righting himself heroically at all points possible, bearing his penalty, and showing the courage

of daily wearing the sackcloth of remorse and restitution.'

'Oh,' she persisted, 'you make me angry. I know what you wish to express; I know that you consider it a sin to take one's life, even in "the high Roman fashion." But, frankly, I do not, and I fear —or rather, I fancy—that I never shall. After all, your belief is a pitiless one; for, as I have tried to say, the man has not himself alone to consider, but those to whom his living is a perpetual shame and menace and cruelty insupportable—insupportable! Now, please, let us change the subject finally; and' —here she softly laughed—'forgive me if I have treated your fancied infatuation lightly or indifferently. I want you for a friend — at least, for a pleasant acquaintance. I do not want you for a lover.'

We both rose. I was not quite content with her nor with myself yet. I felt sure that while she did not wish me for a lover, she was not averse to my playing the devoted cavalier, who should give all, while she should give nothing. I knew that my punishment had already begun. We paced the deck in silence; and once, as we walked far aft, I saw, leaning upon the railing of the intermediate deck, and looking towards us—Boyd Madras; and the words of that letter which he wrote on the No Man's Sea came to me.

At length she said: 'You have made no reply to my last remark. Are we to be friends, and not lovers? Or shall you cherish enmity against me? Or, worse still,'—and here she laughed, I thought, a little ironically,—'avoid me, and be as icy as you have been—fervid?'

'Mrs. Falchion,' I said, 'your enemy I do not wish to be—I could not be if I wished; but, for the rest, you must please let me see what I may think of myself to-morrow. There is much virtue in to-morrow,' I added; 'it enables one to get perspective.'

'I understand,' she said; and then was silent. We walked the deck slowly for several minutes. Then we were accosted by two ladies of a committee that had the fancy-dress ball in hand. They wished to consult Mrs. Falchion in certain matters of costume and decoration, for which, it had been discovered, she had a peculiar faculty. She turned to me half inquiringly, and I bade her good-night, inwardly determined (how easy it is after having failed to gratify ourselves!) that the touch of her fingers should never again make my heart beat faster.

I joined Colonel Ryder and Clovelly in the smoking-room. Hungerford, as I guessed gladly, was gone. I was too much the coward to meet

his eye just then. Colonel Ryder was estimating the amount he would wager—if he were in the habit of betting—that the *Fulvia* could not turn round in her tracks in twenty minutes, while he parenthetically endorsed Hungerford's remarks to me—though he was ignorant of them—that Lascars should not be permitted on English passenger ships. He was supported by Sir Hayes Craven, a shipowner, who further said that not one out of ten British sailors could swim, while not five out of ten could row a boat properly. Ryder's anger was great, because Clovelly remarked with mock seriousness that the Lascars were picturesque, and asked the American if he had watched them listlessly eating rice and curry as they squatted between decks; whether he had observed the *Serang*, with his silver whistle, who ruled them, and despised us 'poor white trash;' and if he did not think it was a good thing to have fatalists like them as sailors—they would be cool in time of danger.

Colonel Ryder's indignation was curbed, however, by the bookmaker, who, having no views, but seeing an opportunity for fun, brought up reinforcements of chaff and slang, easily construable into profanity, and impregnated with terse humour Many of the ladies had spoken of the bookmaker

as one of the best-mannered men on board. So he was to all appearance. None dressed with better taste, nor carried himself with such an air. There was even a deferential tone in his strong language, a hesitating quaintness, which made it irresistible. He was at the service of any person on board needing championship. His talents were varied. He could suggest harmonies in colour to the ladies at one moment, and at the next, in the seclusion of the bar counter, arrange deadly harmonies in liquor. He was an authority on acting; he knew how to edit a newspaper; he picked out the really nice points in the sermons delivered by the missionaries in the saloon; he had some marvellous theories about navigation; and his trick with a salad was superb. He now convulsed the idlers in the smoking-room with laughter, and soon deftly drew off the discussion to the speed of the vessel, arranging a sweepstake immediately, upon the possibilities of the run. He instantly proposed to sell the numbers by auction. He was the auctioneer. With his eyeglass at his eye, and Bohemian pleasantry falling from his lips, he ran the prices up. He was selling Clovelly's number, and had advanced it beyond the novelist's own bidding, when suddenly the screw stopped, the engines ceased working, and the *Fulvia* slowed down.

The numbers remained unsold. Word came to us that an accident had happened to the machinery, and that we should be hove-to for a day, or longer to accomplish necessary repairs. How serious the accident to the machinery was no one knew.

CHAPTER V.

ACCUSING FACES.

WHILE we were hove-to, the *Porcupine* passed us. In all probability it would now get to Aden ahead of us; and herein lay a development of the history of Mrs. Falchion. I was standing beside Belle Treherne as the ship came within hail of us and signalled to see what was the matter. Mrs. Falchion was not far from us. She was looking intently at the vessel through marine-glasses, and she did not put them down until it had passed. Then she turned away with an abstracted light in her eyes and a wintry smile; and the look and the smile continued when she sat down in her deck-chair and leaned her cheek meditatively on the marine-glass. But I saw now that something was added to the expression of her face—a suggestion of brooding or wonder. Belle Treherne, noticing the direction of my glances, said: 'Have you known Mrs. Falchion long?'

'No, not long,' I replied. 'Only since she came on board.'

'She is very clever, I believe.'

I felt my face flushing, though, reasonably, there was no occasion for it, and I said: 'Yes, she is one of the ablest women I have ever met.'

'She is beautiful, too—very beautiful.' This very frankly.

'Have you talked with her?' said I.

'Yes, a little this morning, for the first time. She did not speak much, however.' Here Miss Treherne paused, and then added meditatively, —'Do you know, she impressed me as having singular frankness and singular reserve as well? I think I admired it. There is no feeling in her speech, and yet it has great candour. I never before met any one like her. She does not wear her heart upon her sleeve, I imagine.'

A moment of irony came over me; that desire to say what one really does not believe (a feminine trait), and I replied: 'Are both those articles necessary to any one? A sleeve?—well, one must be clothed. But a heart?—a cumbrous thing, as I take it.'

Belle Treherne turned, and looked me steadily in the eyes for an instant, as if she had suddenly awakened from abstraction, and slowly said, while

she drew back slightly: 'Dr. Marmion, I am only a girl, I know, and inexperienced, but I hoped most people of education and knowledge of life were free from that kind of cynicism to be read of in books.' Then something in her thoughts seemed to chill her words and manner, and her father coming up a moment after, she took his arm, and walked away with a not very cordial bow to me.

The fact is, with a woman's quick intuition, she had read in my tone something suggestive of my recent experience with Mrs. Falchion. Her fine womanliness awoke; the purity of her thoughts rose in opposition to my flippancy and to me; and I knew that I had raised a prejudice not easy to destroy.

This was on a Friday afternoon.

On the Saturday evening following, the fancy-dress ball was to occur. The accident to the machinery and our delay were almost forgotten in the preparations therefor. I had little to do; there was only one sick man on board, and my hand could not cure his sickness. How he fared, my uncomfortable mind, now bitterly alive to a sense of duty, almost hesitated to inquire. Yet a change had come. A reaction had set in for me. Would it be permanent? I dared scarcely answer that

question, with Mrs. Falchion at my right hand at table, with her voice at my ear. I was not quite myself yet; I was struggling, as it were, with the effects of a fantastic dream.

Still, I had determined upon my course. I had made resolutions. I had ended the chapter of dalliance. I had wished to go to 116 Intermediate and let its occupant demand what satisfaction he would. I wanted to say to Hungerford that I was an ass; but that was even harder still. He was so thorough and uncompromising in nature, so strong in moral fibre, that I felt his sarcasm would be too outspoken for me just at present. In this, however, I did not give him credit for a fine sense of consideration, as after events showed. Although there had been no spoken understanding between us that Mrs. Falchion was the wife of Boyd Madras, the mind of one was the other's also. I understood exactly why he told me Boyd Madras's story: it was a warning. He was not the man to harp on things. He gave the hint, and there the matter ended, so far as he was concerned, until a time might come when he should think it his duty to refer to the subject again. Some time before, he had shown me the portrait of the girl who had promised to be his wife. She, of course, could trust *him* anywhere, everywhere.

Mrs. Falchion had seen the change in me, and, I am sure, guessed the new direction of my thoughts, and knew that I wished to take refuge in a new companionship—a thing, indeed, not easily to be achieved, as I felt now ; for no girl of delicate and proud temper would complacently regard a hasty transference of attention from another to herself. Besides, it would be neither courteous nor reasonable to break with Mrs. Falchion abruptly. The error was mine, not hers. She had not my knowledge of the immediate circumstances, which made my position morally untenable. She showed unembarrassed ignorance of the change. At the same time I caught a tone of voice and a manner which showed she was not actually oblivious, but was touched in that nerve called vanity ; and from this much feminine hatred springs.

I made up my mind to begin a course of scientific reading, and was seated in my cabin, vainly trying to digest a treatise on the pathology of the nervous system, when Hungerford appeared at the door. With a nod, he entered, threw himself down on the cabin sofa, and asked for a match. After a pause, he said : 'Marmion, Boyd Madras, *alias* Charles Boyd, has recognised me.'

I rose to get a cigar, thus turning my face from him, and said,—'Well?'

'Well, there isn't anything very startling. I suppose he wishes I had left him in the dingey on No Man's Sea. He's a fool.'

'Indeed, why?'

'Marmion, are your brains softening? Why does he shadow a woman who wouldn't lift her finger to save him from battle, murder, or sudden death?'

'From the code,' I said, in half soliloquy.

'From the what?'

'Oh, never mind, Hungerford. I suppose he is shadowing—Mrs. Falchion?'

He eyed me closely.

'I mean the woman that chucked his name; that turned her back on him when he was in trouble; that hopes he is dead, if she doesn't believe that he is actually; that would, no doubt, treat him as a burglar if he went to her, got down on his knees, and said: "Mercy, my girl, I've come back to you a penitent prodigal. Henceforth I shall be as straight as the sun, so help me Heaven and your love and forgiveness!"'

Hungerford paused, as if expecting me to reply; but, leaning forward on my knees and smoking hard, I remained silent. This seemed to anger him, for he said a little roughly: 'Why doesn't he come out and give you blazes on the promenade

deck, and corner her down with a mighty cheek, and levy on her for a thousand pounds? Both you and she would think more of him. Women don't dislike being bullied, if it is done in the right way,—haven't I seen it the world over, from lubra to dowager? I tell you, man—sinning or not—was meant to be woman's master and lover, and just as much one as the other.'

At this point Hungerford's manner underwent a slight change, and he continued: 'Marmion, I wouldn't have come near you, only I noticed you have altered your course, and are likely to go on a fresh tack. It isn't my habit to worry a man. I gave you a signal, and you didn't respond at first. Well, we have come within hail again; and now, don't you think that you might help to straighten this tangle, and try to arrange a reconciliation between those two?

'The scheme is worth trying. Nobody need know but you and me. It wouldn't be much of a sacrifice to her to give him a taste of the thing she swore to do—how does it run?—"to have and to hold from this day forward"?—I can't recall it; but it's whether the wind blows fair or foul, or the keel scrapes the land or gives to the rock, till the sea gulps one of 'em down for ever.

'That's the sense of the thing, Marmion, and

the contract holds between the two, straight on into the eternal belly. Whatever happens, a husband is a husband, and a wife a wife. It seems to me that, in the sight of Heaven, it's he that's running fair in the teeth of the wind, every timber straining, and she that's riding with it, well coaled, flags flying, in an open channel, and passing the derelict without so much as, "Ahoy there!"'

Now, at this distance of time, I look back, and see Hungerford, 'the rowdy sailor,' as he called himself, lying there, his dark grey eyes turned full on me; and I am convinced that no honester, more sturdy-minded man ever reefed a sail, took his turn upon the bridge, or walked the dry land in the business of life. It did not surprise me, a year after, when I saw in public prints that he was the hero of—but that must be told elsewhere. I was about to answer him then as I knew he would wish, when a steward appeared and said: 'Mr. Boyd, 116 Intermediate, wishes you would come to him, sir, if you would be so kind.'

Hungerford rose, and, as I made ready to go, urged quietly: 'You've got the charts and soundings, Marmion, steam ahead!' and, with a swift but kindly clench of my shoulder, he left me. In that moment there came a cowardly feeling, a sense

of shamefacedness, and then, hard upon it, and overwhelming it, a determination to serve Boyd Madras so far as lay in my power, and to be a man, and not a coward or an idler.

When I found him he was prostrate. In his eyes there was no anger, no indignation, nor sullenness—all of which he might reasonably have felt; and instantly I was ashamed of the thought which, as I came to him, flashed through my mind, that he might do some violent thing. Not that I had any fear of violence; but I had an active dislike of awkward circumstances. I felt his fluttering pulse, and noted the blue line on his warped lips. I gave him some medicine, and then sat down. There was a silence. What could I say? A dozen thoughts came to my mind, but I rejected them. It was difficult to open up the subject. At last he put his hand upon my arm and spoke:

'You told me one night that you would help me if you could. I ought to have accepted your offer at first; it would have been better. — No, please don't speak just yet. I think I know what you would say. I knew that you meant all you urged upon me; that you liked me. I was once worthy of men's liking, perhaps, and I had good comrades; but that is all over. You have not

come near me lately, but it wasn't because you felt any neglect, or wished to take back your words; but — because of something else. . . . I understand it all. She has great power. She always had. She is very beautiful. I remember when—but I will not call it back before you, though, God knows, I go over it all every day and every night, until it seems that only the memory of her is real, and that she herself is a ghost. I ought not to have crossed her path again, even unknown to her. But I have done it, and now I cannot go out of that path without kneeling before her once again, as I did long ago. Having seen her, breathed the same air, I must speak or die; perhaps it will be both. That is a power she has: she can bend one to her will, although she often, involuntarily, wills things that are death to others. One *must* care for her, you understand; it is natural, even when it is torture to do so.'

He put his hand on his side and moved as if in pain. I reached over and felt his pulse, then took his hand and pressed it, saying: 'I will be your friend now, Boyd Madras, in so far as I can, God helping me!'

He looked up at me gratefully, and replied: 'I know that—I know that. It is more than I deserve.'

Then he began to speak of his past. He told me of Hungerford's kindness to him on the *Dancing Kate*, of his luckless days at Port Darwin, of his search for his wife, his writing to her, and her refusal to see him. He did not rail against her. He apologised for her, and reproached himself. 'She is most singular,' he continued, 'and different from most women. She never said she loved me, and she never did, I know. Her father urged her to marry me; he thought I was a good man.'

Here he laughed a little bitterly. 'But it was a bad day for her. She never loved any one, I think, and she cannot understand what love is, though many have cared for her. She is silent where herself is concerned. I think there was some trouble—not love, I am sure of that—which vexed her, and made her a little severe at times; something connected with her life, or her father's life, in Samoa. One can only guess, but white men take what are called native wives there very often,—and who can tell? Her father—but that is her secret! . . . While I was right before the world, she was a good wife to me in her way. When I went wrong, she treated me as if I were dead, and took her old name. But if I could speak to her quietly once more, perhaps she would

listen. It would be no good at all to write. Perhaps she would never begin the world with me again, but I should like to hear her say, "I forgive you. Good-bye." There would be some comfort in a kind farewell from her. You can see that, Dr. Marmion?'

He paused, waiting for me to speak. 'Yes, I can see that,' I said; and then I added, 'Why did you not speak to her before you both came on board at Colombo?'

'I had no chance. I only saw her in the street, an hour before the ship sailed. I had scarcely time to take my passage.'

Pain here checked his utterance, and when he recovered, he turned again to me, and continued: 'To-morrow night there is to be a fancy-dress ball on board. I have been thinking. I could go in a good disguise. I could speak to her, and attract no notice; and if she will not listen to me, why, then, that ends it. I shall know the worst, and to know the worst is good.'

'Yes,' said I; 'and what do you wish me to do?'

'I wish to go in a disguise, of course; to dress in your cabin, if you will let me. I cannot dress here, it would attract attention; and I am not a first-class passenger.'

'I fear,' I replied, 'that it is impossible for me to assist you to the privileges of a first-class passenger. You see, I am an officer of the ship. But still I can help you. You shall leave this cabin to-night. I will arrange so that you may transfer yourself to one in the first-class section. . . . No, not a word; it must be as I wish in this. You are ill; I can do you that kindness at least, and then, by right, you can attend the ball, and, after it, your being among the first-class passengers can make little difference; for you will have met and spoken then, either to peace or otherwise.'

I had very grave doubts of any reconciliation; the substance of my notable conversation with Mrs. Falchion was so prominent in my mind. I feared she would only reproduce the case of Anson and his wife. I was also afraid of a possible scene—which showed that I was not yet able to judge of her resources. After a time, in which we sat silent, I said to Boyd Madras,—'But suppose she should be frightened?—should—should make a scene?'

He raised himself to a sitting posture. 'I feel better,' he said. Then, answering my question: 'You do not know her quite. She will not stir a muscle. She has nerve. I have seen her in positions of great peril and trial. She is not

emotional, though I truly think she will wake one day and find her heart all fire—but not for me. Still, I say that all will be quite comfortable, so far as any demonstration on her part is concerned. She will not be melodramatic, I do assure you.'

'And the disguise—your dress?' inquired I.

He rose from the berth slowly, and, opening a portmanteau, drew from it a cloth of white and red, fringed with gold. It was of beautiful texture, and made into the form of a toga or mantle. He said: 'I was a seller of such stuffs in Colombo, and these I brought with me, because I could not dispose of them without sacrifice when I left hurriedly. I have made them into a mantle. I could go as—a noble Roman, perhaps!' Then a slight, ironical smile crossed his lips, and he stretched out his thin but shapely arms, as if in derision of himself.

'You will go as Menelaus the Greek,' said I.

'I as Menelaus the Greek?' The smile became a little grim.

'Yes, as Menelaus; and I will go as Paris.' I doubt not that my voice showed a good deal of self-scorn at the moment; but there was a kind of luxury in self-abasement before him. 'Your wife, I know, intends to go as Helen

of Troy. It is all mumming. Let it stand so, as Menelaus and Helen and Paris before there was any Trojan war, and as if there never could be any,—as if Paris went back discomfited, and the other two were reconciled.'

His voice was low and broken. 'I know you exaggerate matters, and condemn yourself beyond reason,' he replied. 'I will do as you say. But, Dr. Marmion, it will not be *all* mumming, as you shall see.'

A strange look came upon his face at this. I could not construe it; and, after a few words of explanation regarding his transference to the forward part of the ship, I left him. I found the purser, made the necessary arrangements for him, and then sought my cabin, humbled in many ways. I went troubled to bed. After a long wakefulness, I dozed away into that disturbed vestibule of sleep where the world's happenings mingle with the visions of unconsciousness. I seemed to see a man's heart beating in his bosom in growing agonies, until, with one last immense palpitation, it burst, and life was gone. Then the dream changed, and I saw a man in the sea, drowning, who seemed never to drown entirely, his hands ever beating the air and the mocking water. I thought that I tried many times to throw him a lighted

buoy in the half-shadow, but some one held me back, and I knew that a woman's arms were round me.

But at last the drowning man looked up and saw the woman so, and, with a last quiver of the arms, he sank from sight. When he was gone, the woman's arms dropped away from me; but when I turned to speak to her, she too had gone.

I awoke!

Two stewards were talking in the passage, and one was saying, 'She'll get under way by daybreak, and it will be a race with the *Porcupine* to Aden. How the engines are kicking below!'

CHAPTER VI.

MUMMERS ALL.

THE next day was beautiful, if not enjoyable. Stirring preparations were being made for the ball. Boyd Madras was transferred to a cabin far forward, but he did not appear at any meal in the saloon, or on deck. In the morning I was busy in the dispensary. While I was there, Justine Caron came to get some medicine that I had before given her. Her hand was now nearly well. Justine had nerves, and it appeared to me that her efforts to please her mistress, and her occasional failures, were wearing her unduly. I said to her: 'You have been worried, Miss Caron?'

'Oh no, Doctor,' she quickly replied.

I looked at her a little sceptically, and she said at last: 'Well, perhaps a little. You see, madame did not sleep well last night, and I read to her. It was a little difficult, and there was not much choice of books.'

'What did you read?' I asked mechanically, as I prepared her medicine.

'Oh, some French novel first—De Maupassant's; but madame said he was impertinent—that he made women fools and men devils. Then I tried some modern English tales, but she said they were silly. I knew not what to do. But there was Shakespeare. I read *Antony and Cleopatra*, and she said that the play was grand, but the people were foolish except when they died—their deaths were magnificent. Madame is a great critic; she is very clever.'

'Yes, yes, I know that; but when did she fall asleep?'

'About four o'clock in the morning. I was glad, because she is very beautiful when she has much sleep.'

'And you—does not sleep concern you in this matter of madame?'

'For me,' she said, looking away, 'it is no matter. I have no beauty. Besides, I am madame's servant,'—she blushed slightly at this,—'and she is generous with money.'

'Yes, and you like money so much?'

Her eyes flashed a little defiantly as she looked me in the face. 'It is everything to me.'

She paused as if to see the effect upon me, or to

get an artificial (I knew it was artificial) strength to go on, then she added: 'I love money. I work for it; I would bear all for it—all that a woman could bear. I——' But here she paused again, and, though the eyes still flashed, the lips quivered. Hers was not the face of cupidity. It was sensitive, yet firm, as with some purpose deep as her nature was by creation and experience, and always deepening that nature. I suddenly got the conviction that this girl had a sorrow of some kind in her life, and that this unreal affection for money was connected with it. Perhaps she saw my look of interest, for she hurriedly continued: 'But, pardon me, I am foolish. I shall be better when the pain is gone. Madame is kind; she will let me sleep this afternoon, perhaps.'

I handed her the medicine, and then asked: 'How long have you known Mrs. Falchion, Miss Caron?'

'Only one year.'

'Where did you join her?'

'In Australia.'

'In Australia? You lived there?'

'No, monsieur, I did not live there.'

A thought came to my mind—the nearness of New Caledonia to Australia, and New Caledonia

was a French colony—a French penal colony! I smiled as I said the word *penal* to myself. Of course the word could have no connection with a girl like her, but still she might have lived in the colony. So I added quietly: 'You perhaps had come from New Caledonia?'

Her look was candid, if sorrowful. 'Yes, from New Caledonia.'

Was she, thought I, the good wife of some convict—some political prisoner?—the relative of some refugee of misfortune? Whatever she was, I was sure that she was free from any fault. She evidently thought that I might suspect something uncomplimentary of her, for she said: 'My brother was an officer at Noumea. He is dead. I am going to France, when I can.'

I tried to speak gently to her. I saw that her present position must be a trial. I advised her to take more rest, or she would break down altogether, for she was weak and nervous; I hinted that she might have to give up entirely, if she continued to tax herself heedlessly; and, finally, that I would speak to Mrs. Falchion about her. I was scarcely prepared for her action then. Tears came to her eyes, and she said to me, her hand involuntarily clasping my arm,—'Oh no, no! I ask you not to speak to madame. I will sleep—I will rest.

Indeed, I will. This service is so much to me. She is most generous. It is because I am so altogether hers, night and day, that she pays me well. And the money is so much. It is my honour — my dead brother's honour. You are kind at heart; you will make me strong with medicine, and I will ask God to bless you. I could not suffer such poverty again. And then, it is my honour!'

I felt that she would not have given way thus had not her nerves been shaken, had she not lived so much alone, and irregularly, so far as her own rest and comfort were concerned, and at such perpetual cost to her energy. Mrs. Falchion, I knew, was selfish, and would not, or could not, see that she was hard upon the girl, by such exactions as midnight reading and loss of sleep. She demanded not merely physical but mental energy — a complete submission of both; and when this occurred with a sensitive, high-strung girl, she was literally feeding on another's life-blood. If she had been told this, she, no doubt, would have been very much surprised.

I reassured Justine. I told her that I should say nothing directly to Mrs. Falchion, for I saw she was afraid of unpleasantness; but I impressed

upon her that she must spare herself, or she would break down, and extorted a promise that she would object to sitting up after midnight to read to Mrs. Falchion.

When this was done, she said: 'But, you see, it is not madame's fault that I am troubled.'

'I do not wish,' I said, 'to know any secret,—I am a doctor, not a priest,—but if there is anything you can tell me, in which I might be able to help you, you may command me in so far as is possible.' Candidly, I think I was too inquiring in those days.

She smiled wistfully, and replied: 'I will think of what you say so kindly, and perhaps, some day soon, I will tell you of such trouble as I have. But, believe me, it is no question of wrong at all, by any one—now. The wrong is over. It is simply that a debt of honour must be satisfied; it concerns my poor dead brother.'

'Are you going to relatives in France?' I asked.

'No; I have no relatives, no near friends. I am alone in the world. My mother I cannot remember; she died when I was very young. My father had riches, but they went before he died. Still, France is home, and I must go there.' She turned her head away to the long wastes of sea.

Little more passed between us. I advised her to come often on deck, and mingle with the passengers; and told her that, when she pleased, I should be glad to do any service that lay in my power. Her last words were that, after we put into Aden, she would possibly take me at my word.

After she had gone, I found myself wondering at my presentiment that Aden was to be associated with critical points in the history of some of us; and from that moment I began to connect Justine Caron with certain events which, I felt sure, were marshalling to an unhappy conclusion. I wondered, too, what part I should play in the development of the comedy, tragedy, or whatever it was to be. In this connection I thought of Belle Treherne, and of how I should appear in her eyes if that little scene with Mrs. Falchion, now always staring me in the face, were rehearsed before her. I came quickly to my feet, with a half-imprecation at myself; and a verse of a crude sea-song was in my ears—

> 'You can batten down cargo, live and dead,
> But you can't put memory out of sight;
> You can paint the full sails overhead,
> But you can't make a black deed white. . . .'

Angry, I said to myself, 'It wasn't a black deed; it was foolish, it was infatuation, it was

not right, but it is common to shipboard; and I lost my head, that was all.'

Some time later I was still at work in the dispensary, when I heard Mr. Treherne's voice calling to me from outside. I drew back the curtain. He was leaning on his daughter's arm, while in one hand he carried a stick. 'Ah, Doctor, Doctor,' cried he, 'my old enemy, sciatica, has me in its grip, and why, in this warm climate, I can't understand. I'm afraid I shall have to heave-to, like the *Fulvia*, and lay up for repairs. And, by the way, I'm glad we are on our course again.' He entered, and sat down. Belle Treherne bowed to me gravely, and smiled slightly. The smile was not peculiarly hospitable. I knew perfectly well that to convince her of the reality of my growing admiration for her would be no easy task; but I was determined to base my new religion of the affections upon unassailable canons, and I felt that now I could do best by waiting and proving myself.

While I was arranging some medicine for Mr. Treherne, and advising him on care against chills in a hot climate, he suddenly broke in with: 'Dr. Marmion, Captain Ascott tells me that we shall get to Aden by Tuesday morning next. Now, I was asked by a friend of mine in London

to visit the grave of a son of his—a newspaper correspondent — who was killed in one of the expeditions against the native tribes, and was buried in the general cemetery at Aden. On the way out I was not able to fulfil the commission, because we passed Aden in the night. But there will be plenty of time to do so on Tuesday, I am told. This, however, is my difficulty: I cannot go unless I am better, and I'm afraid there is no such luck as that in store for me. These attacks last a week, at least. I wish my daughter, however, to go. One of the ladies on board will go with her—Mrs. Callendar, I believe; and I am going to be so bold as to ask you to accompany them, if you will. I know you better than any officer on board; and, besides, I should feel safer and better satisfied if she went under the protection of an officer,—these barbarous places, you know! — though, of course, it may be asking too much of you, or what is impossible.'

I assented with pleasure. Belle Treherne was looking at the Latin names on the bottles at the time, and her face showed no expression either of pleasure or displeasure. Mr. Treherne said bluffly: 'Dr. Marmion, you are kind—very kind, and, upon my word, I'm much obliged.' He then looked at his daughter as if expecting her to speak.

She looked up and said conventionally: 'You are very kind, Dr. Marmion, and I am much obliged.'

Then I thought her eyes twinkled with amusement at her own paraphrase of her father's speech, and she added,—'Mrs. Callendar and myself will be much honoured indeed, and feel very important in having an officer to attend us. Of course everybody else will be envious, and, again of course, that will add to our vanity.'

At this she would have gone; but her father, who was suffering just enough pain to enjoy anything that would divert his attention from it, fell into conversation upon a subject of mutual interest, in which his daughter joined on occasion, but not with enthusiasm. Yet, when they came to go, she turned and said kindly, almost softly, as her fingers touched mine,—'I almost envy you your profession, Dr. Marmion. It opens doors to so much of humanity and life.'

'There is no sin,' I laughingly said, 'in such a covetousness, and, believe me, it can do no harm to me, at least.' Then I added gravely: 'I should like my profession, in so far as I am concerned, to be worth your envy.' She had passed through the door before the last words were said, but I saw that her look was not forbidding.

. . . . . .

Is there unhappiness anywhere? There is not a vexing toss of the sea, not a cloud in the sky. Is not catastrophe dead, and the arrows of tragedy spilled? Peace broadens into deep, perfumed dusk towards Arabia; languor spreads towards the unknown lands of the farthest south. No anxious soul leans out from the casement of life; the time is heavy with delightful ease. There is no sound that troubles; the world goes by and no one heeds; for it is all beyond this musky twilight and this pleasant hour. In this palace on the sea Mirth trails in and out with airy and harmonious footsteps. Even the *clang-clang* of eight bells has music—not boisterous nor disturbing, but muffled in the velvety air. Then, through this hemisphere of jocund quiet, there sounds the 'All's well' of the watch.

But, look! Did you see a star fall just then, and the long avenue of expiring flame behind it?—Do not shudder; it is nothing. No cry of pain came through that brightness. There was only the 'All's well' from the watchers.

The thud of the engines falls on a padded atmosphere, and the Lascars move like ghosts along the decks. The long, smooth promenade is canopied and curtained, and hung with banners,

and gay devices of the gorgeous East are contributing to the federation of pleasure.

And now, through a festooned doorway, there come the people of many lands to inhabit the gay court. Music follows their footsteps: Hamlet and Esther; Caractacus and Iphigenia; Napoleon and Hermione; The Man in the Iron Mask and Sappho; Garibaldi and Boadicea; an Arab sheikh and Joan of Arc; Mahomet and Casabianca; Cleopatra and Hannibal — a resurrected world. But the illusion is short and slight. This world is very sordid—of shreds and patches, after all. It is but a pretty masquerade, in which feminine vanity beats hard against strangely-clothed bosoms; and masculine conceit is shown in the work of the barber's curling-irons and the ship-carpenter's wooden swords and paper helmets. The pride of these folk is not diminished because Hamlet's wig gets awry, or a Roman has trouble with his foolish garters. Few men or women can resist mumming; they fancy themselves as somebody else, dead or living. Yet these seem happy in this nonsense. The indolent days appear to have deadened hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. They shall strut and fret their hour upon this little stage. Let that sprightly girl forget the sudden death which made her an orphan; the nervous broker his faithless

wife; the grey-haired soldier his silly and haunting sins; the bankrupt his creditors.

'On with the dance, let joy be unconfined!' For the captain is on the bridge, the engineer is beneath; we have stout walls, and a ceaseless sentry-go. In the intervals of the dance wine passes, and idle things are said beside the draped and cushioned capstan or in the friendly gloom of a boat, which, in the name of safety, hangs taut between its davits. Let this imitation Cleopatra use the Cleopatra's arts; this mellow Romeo (sometime an Irish landlord) vow to this coy Juliet; this Helen of Troy—Of all who walked these decks, mantled and wigged in characters not their own, Mrs. Falchion was the handsomest, most convincing. With a graceful swaying movement she passed along the promenade, and even envy praised her. Her hand lay lightly on the arm of a brown stalwart native of the Indian hills, fierce and savage in attire. Against his wild picturesqueness and brawny strength, her perfectness of animal beauty, curbed and rendered delicate by her inner coldness, showed in fine contrast; and yet both were matched in the fine natural prowess of form.

With a singular affirmation of what had been, after all, but a sadly-humorous proposal, I had attired myself in a Greek costume—quickly made by

my steward, who had been a tailor—and was about to leave my cabin, when Hungerford entered, and exclaimed, as he took his pipe from his mouth in surprise,—'Marmion, what does this mean? Don't you know your duties better? No officer may appear at these flare-ups in costume other than his uniform. You're the finest example of suburban innocence and original sin I've seen this last quarter of a century, wherein I've kept the world —and you—from tottering to destruction.' He reached for one of my cigars.

Without a word, and annoyed at my own stupidity, I slowly divested myself of the clothes of Greece; while Hungerford smoked on, humming to himself occasionally a few bars of *The Buccaneer's Bride*, but evidently occupied with something in his mind. At length he said: 'Marmion, I said suburban innocence and original sin, but you've a grip on the law of square and compass too. I'll say that for you, old chap,—and I hope you don't think I'm a miserable prig.'

Still I replied nothing, but offered him one of my best cigars, taking the other one from him, and held the match while he lighted it—which, between men, is sufficient evidence of good-feeling. He understood, and continued: 'Of course you'll keep your eye on Mrs. Falchion and Madras to-night:

if he is determined that they shall meet, and you have arranged it. I'd like to know how it goes before you turn in, if you don't mind. And, I say, Marmion, ask Miss Treherne to keep a dance for me—a waltz—towards the close of the evening, will you? Excuse me, but she is the thoroughbred of the ship. And if I have only one hop down the promenade, I want it to be with a girl who'll remind me of some one that is making West Kensington worth inhabiting. Only think, Marmion, of a girl like her—a graduate in arts, whose name and picture have been in all the papers—being willing to make up with me, Dick Hungerford! She is as natural and simple as a girl can be, and doesn't throw Greek roots at you, nor try to convince you of the difference between the songs of the troubadours and the sonnets of Petrarch. She doesn't care a rap whether Dante's Beatrice was a real woman or a principle; whether James the First poisoned his son; or what's the margin between a sine and a cosine. She can take a fence in the hunting-field like a bird——! Oh, all right, just hold still, and I'll unfasten it.' And he struggled with a recalcitrant buckle. 'Well, you'll not forget about Miss Treherne, will you? She ought to go just as she is. Fancy-dress on her would be gilding the gold; for, though she isn't surpassingly

beautiful, she is very fine, very fine indeed. There, now, you're yourself again, and look all the better for it.'

By this time I was again in my uniform, and I sat down, and smoked, and looked at Hungerford. His long gossip had been more or less detached, and I had said nothing. I understood that he was trying, in his blunt, honest way, to turn my thoughts definitely from Mrs. Falchion to Belle Treherne; and he never seemed to me such a good fellow as at that moment. I replied at last,—'All right, Hungerford; I'll be your deputation, your ambassador, to Miss Treherne. What time shall we see you on deck?'

'About 11.40—just in time to trip a waltz on the edge of eight bells.'

'On the edge of Sunday, my boy.'

'Yes. Do you know, it is just four years ago to-morrow since I found Boyd Madras on the No Man's Sea?'

'Let us not talk of it,' said I.

'All right. I merely stated the fact, because it came to me. I'm mum henceforth. And I want to talk about something else. The first officer,—I don't know whether you have noticed him lately, but I tell you this,—if we ever get into any trouble with this ship he'll go to pieces. Why

the other night, when the engine got tangled, he was as timid as a woman. That shock he had with the coal, as I said before, has broken his nerve, big man as he is.'

'Hungerford,' I said, 'you do not generally croak, but you are earning the character of the raven for yourself to-night. The thing is growing on you. What *is* the use of bringing up unpleasant subjects? You are an old woman.' I fear there was the slightest irritation in my voice; but, truth is, the last few days' experiences had left their mark on me, and Hungerford's speech and manner had suddenly grown trying.

He stood for a moment looking at me with direct earnestness from under his strong brows, and then he stepped forward, and, laying his hand upon my arm, rejoined: 'Do not be raw, Marmion, I'm only a blunt, stupid sailor; and, to tell you God's truth, as I have told you before, every sailor is superstitious—every real sailor. He can't help it—I can't. I have a special fit on me now. Why don't I keep it to myself? Because I'm selfish, and it does me good to talk. You and I are in one secret together, and it has made me feel like sharing this thing with a pal, I suppose.'

I seized his hand and begged his pardon, and called myself unpleasant names, which he on the

instant stopped, and said: 'That's all right, Marmy; shake till the knuckles crack! I'm off. Don't forget the dance.' He disappeared down the passage.

Then I went on deck, and the scene which I have so imperfectly described passed before me. Mrs. Falchion was surrounded with admirers all the evening, both men and women; and two of the very stately English ladies of title, to whom I before referred, were particularly gracious to her; while she, in turn, bore herself with becoming dignity. I danced with her once, and was down on her programme for another dance. I had also danced with Belle Treherne, who appeared as Miriam, and was chaperoned by one of the ladies of title; and I had also 'sat out' one dance with her. Chancing to pass her as the evening wore on, I saw her in conversation with Mrs. Falchion, who had dismissed her cavalier, preferring to talk, she said, 'for dancing was tiresome work on the Indian Ocean.'

Belle Treherne, who up to that moment had never quite liked her, yielded to the agreeable charm of her conversation and her frank applausive remarks upon the costumes of the dancers. She had a good word for every one, and she drew her companion out to make the most of herself, as women less often do before women than in the presence of men. I am certain that her interest

in Belle Treherne was real, and likewise certain that she cherished no pique against her because I had transferred my allegiance. Indeed, I am sure that she had no deep feeling of injured pride where I was concerned. Such after acidity as she sometimes showed was directed against the foolish part I had played with her and my action in subsequent events; it did not proceed from personal feeling or self-value.

Some time after this meeting I saw Boyd Madras issue from the companion-way dressed as a Greek. He wore a false beard, and carried off well his garments of white and scarlet and gold—a very striking and presentable man. He came slowly forward, looking about him steadily, and, seeing me, moved towards me. But for his manner I should scarcely have recognised him. A dance was beginning; but many eyes were turned curiously, and even admiringly, to him; for he looked singular and impressive and his face was given fulness by a beard and flesh paints. I motioned him aside where there was shadow, and said,—'Well, you have determined to see her?'

'Yes,' he said; 'and I wish you, if you will, to introduce me to her as Mr. Charles Boyd.

'You still think this wise?' I asked.

'It is my earnest wish. I must have an under-

standing to-night.' He spoke very firmly, and showed no excitement. His manner was calm and gentlemanly.

He had a surprising air of decision. Supporting an antique character, he seemed for the moment to have put on also something of antique strength of mind, and to be no longer the timid invalid. 'Then, come with me,' I answered.

We walked in silence for a few minutes, and then, seeing where Mrs. Falchion was, we advanced to her. The next dance on her programme was mine. In my previous dance with her we had talked as we now did at table—as we did the first hour I met her—impersonally, sometimes (I am bold to say) amusingly. Now I approached her with apologies for being late. The man beside her took his leave. She had only just glanced at me at first, but now she looked at my companion, and the look stayed, curious, bewildered.

'It is fitting,' I said, 'that Greek meet Greek—that Menelaus should be introduced to Helen. May I say that when Helen is not Helen she is Mrs. Falchion, and when Menelaus is not Menelaus he is—Mr. Charles Boyd.'

I am afraid my voice faltered slightly, because there came over me suddenly a nervousness as unexpected as it was inconvenient, and my words,

which began lightly, ended huskily. Had Boyd Madras miscalculated this woman?

Her eyes were afire, and her face was as pale as marble; all its slight but healthy glow had fled. A very faint gasp came from her lips. I saw that she recognised him, as he bowed and mentioned her name, following my introduction. I knew not what might occur, for I saw danger in her eyes in reply to the beseeching look in his. Would melodrama supervene after all?

She merely bowed towards me, as if to dismiss me, and then she rose, took his arm, and moved away. The interview that follows came to me from Boyd Madras afterwards.

When they had reached the semi-darkness of the forward part of the ship, she drew her hand quickly away, and, turning to him, said: 'What is the name by which you are called? One does not always hear distinctly when being introduced.'

He did not understand what she was about to do, but he felt the deadly coldness in her voice. 'My name is known to you,' he replied. He steadied himself.

'No, pardon me, I do not know it, for I do not know you. . . . I never saw you before.' She leaned her hand carelessly on the bulwarks.

He was shocked, but he drew himself together,

Their eyes were intent on each other. 'You do know me! Need I tell you that I am Boyd Madras?'

'Boyd Madras?' she said, musing coldly. 'A peculiar name.'

'Mercy Madras was your name until you called yourself Mrs. Falchion,' he urged indignantly, yet anxiously too.

'It suits you to be mysterious, Mr. — ah yes, Mr. Boyd Madras; but, really, you might be less exacting in your demands upon one's imagination. Her look was again on him casually.

He spoke breathlessly. 'Mercy—Mercy—for God's sake, don't treat me like this! Oh, my wife, I have wronged you every way, but I loved you always—love you now. I have only followed you to ask you to forgive me, after all these years. I saw you in Colombo just before you came on board, and I felt that I must come also. You never loved me. Perhaps that is better for you, but you do not know what I suffer. If you could give me a chance, and come with me to America—anywhere, and let me start the world again? I *can* travel straight now, and I will work hard, and be honest. I will——' But here sudden pain brought back the doubt concerning his life and its possibilities. He leaned against the bulwarks, and made a helpless, despairing motion with his hand

'No, no!' he said; and added with a bitter laugh, 'Not to begin the world again, but to end it as profitably and as silently as I can. . . But you will listen to me, my wife? You will say at least that you forgive me the blight and ill I brought upon you?'

She had listened to him unmoved outwardly. Her reply was instant. 'You are more melodramatic than I thought you capable of being—from your appearance,' she said in a hard tone. 'Your acting is very good, but not convincing. I cannot respond as would become the unity and sequence of the play. . . . I have no husband. My husband is dead—I buried him years ago. I have forgotten his name—I buried that too.'

All the suffering and endured scorn of years came to revolt in him. He leaned forward now, and caught her wrist. 'Have you no human feeling?' he said,—'no heart in you at all? Look: I have it in me here suddenly to kill you as you stand. You have turned my love to hate. From your smooth skin there I could strip those rags, and call upon them all to look at you—my wife—a felon's wife; mine to have and to hold—to hold, you hear!—as it was sworn at the altar. I bare my heart to you, repenting, and you mock it, torture it, with your undying hate and cruelty. You have no

heart, no life. This white bosom is all of you—all of your power to make men love you—this, and your beauty. All else, by God, is cruel as the grave!'

His voice had sunk to a hoarse whisper. She had not sought to remove his hand, nor struggled in the least; and once it seemed as if this new development of his character, this animal fierceness, would conquer her: she admired courage. It was not so. He trembled with weakness before he had finished. He stopped too soon; he lost.

'You will find such parts exhausting to play,' she murmured, as he let her arm fall. 'It needs a strong physique to endure exaggerated, nervous sentiment. And now, please, let us perform less trying scenes.' Then, with a low, cold anger, she continued: 'It is only a coward that will dog a woman who finds his presence insupportable to her. This woman cannot, if she would, endure this man's presence; it is her nature. Well, why rush blindly at the impossible? She wishes to live her spoiled life alone. The man can have no part in it—never, never! But she has money. If in that way——'

He stretched out his hand protestingly, the fingers spread in excitement. 'No more — not another word!' he said. 'I ask for forgiveness,

for one word of kindness—and I am offered money! the fire that burned me to eat, instead of bread! I had a wife once,' he added in a kind of troubled dream, looking at her as if she were very far away, 'and her name was Mercy—her *name* was Mercy —Mercy Madras. I loved her. I sinned for her sake. A message came that she was dead to me; but I could not believe that it was so altogether, for I had knelt at her feet and worshipped her. I went to her, but she sent me away angrily. Years passed. "She will have relented now," I said, and I followed her, and found her as I thought. But it was not she; it was a wicked ghost in her beautiful body—nothing more. And then I turned away and cursed all things, because I knew that I should never see my wife again. Mercy Madras was dead. . . . Can you not hear the curses?'

Still she was unmoved. She said with a cruel impatience in her voice: 'Yes, Mercy Madras is dead. How then can she forgive? What could her ghost—as you call her—do, but offer the thing which her husband—when he was living—loved so well that he sold himself into bondage, and wrecked his world and hers for it—Money? Well, money is at his disposal, as she said before——'

But she spoke no more. The man in him straightway shamed her into silence with a look

She bowed her head, yet not quite in shame, for there was that in her eyes which made her appear as if his suffering was a gratuitous infliction. But at this moment he was stronger, and he drew her eyes up by the sheer force of his will. 'I need no money now,' he coldly declared. 'I need nothing—not even you; and can you fancy that, after waiting all these years for this hour, money would satisfy me? Do you know,' he continued slowly and musingly, 'I can look upon you now — yes, at this moment — with more indifference than you ever showed to me? A moment ago I loved you: now I think you horrible; because you are no woman; you have a savage heart. And some day you will suffer as I do, so terribly that even the brazen serpent could not cure you. Then you will remember me.

He was about to leave her, but he had not taken two steps before he turned, with all the anger and the passion softened in his eyes, and said, putting his hand out towards yet not to touch her, 'Good-bye — for the last time.' And then the look was such as might be turned upon a forgiven excutioner.

'Good-night,' she replied, and she did not look into his eyes, but out to sea. Her eyes remained fixed upon its furtive gloom. She too was furtive and gloomy at this moment. They were both

sleek, silent, and remorseless. There was a slight rustle to her dress as she changed her position. It was in grim keeping with the pitiless rustle of the sea.

And so they parted. I saw him move on towards the companion-way, and though I felt instinctively that all had gone ill with him, I was surprised to see how erect he walked. After a minute I approached her. She heard me coming, and presently turned to me with a curious smile. 'Who is Mr. Charles Boyd?' she asked. 'I did not pierce his disguise. I could not tell whether I had met him on board before. Have I? But my impression is that I had not seen him on the ship.'

'No, you had not seen him,' I replied. 'He had a fancy to travel, until yesterday, with the second-class passengers. Now he has a first-class cabin—in his proper place, in fact.'

'You think so—in his proper place?' The suggestion was not pleasant.

'Assuredly. Why do you speak in that way?' was my indignant reply.

She took my arm as we moved on. 'Because he was slightly rude to me.'

I grew bold, and determined to bring her to some sort of reckoning.

'How rude were you to him?'

'Not rude at all. It is not worth while being so—to anybody,' was her chilly answer.

'I was under the impression you had met him before,' I said gravely.

'Indeed? And why?' She raised her eyebrows at me.

I pushed the matter to a conclusion. 'He was ill the other day—he has heart trouble. It was necessary for me to open the clothes about his neck. On his breast I saw a little ivory portrait of a woman's head.'

'A woman's head?' she repeated absently, and her fingers idly toyed with a jingling ornament in her belt.

In an idle moment I had sketched the head, as I remembered it, on a sheet of paper, and now I took it from my pocket and handed it to her. We were standing near a port-hole of the music saloon, from which light streamed.

'That is the head,' said I.

She deliberately placed the paper in the belt of light, and, looking at it, remarked mechanically,—'This is the head, is it?' She showed no change of countenance, and handed it back to me as if she had seen no likeness. 'It is very interesting,' she said, 'but one would think you might make

better use of your time than by surreptitiously sketching portraits from sick men's breasts. One must have plenty of leisure to do that sort of thing, I should think. Be careful that you do not get into mischief, Dr. Marmion.' She laughed. 'Besides, where was the special peculiarity in that portrait that you should treasure it in pencil so conventionally?—Your drawing is not good.—Where was the point or need?'

'I have no right to reply to that directly,' I responded. 'But this man's life is not for always, and if anything happened to him it would seem curious to strangers to find that on his breast—because, of course, more than I would see it there.'

'If anything happened? What should happen? You mean, on board ship?' There was a little nervousness in her tone now.

'I am only hinting at an awkward possibility,' I replied.

She looked at me scornfully. 'When did you see that picture on his breast?' I told her. 'Ah! before *that* day?' she rejoined. I knew that she referred to the evening when I had yielded foolishly to the fascination of her presence. The blood swam hotly in my face.

'Men are not noble creatures,' she continued.

'I am afraid you would not give many their

patents of nobility if you had power to bestow them,' I answered.

'Most men at the beginning, and very often ever after, are ignoble creatures. Yet I should confer the patents of nobility, if it were my prerogative; for some would succeed in living up to them. Vanity would accomplish that much. Vanity is the secret of *noblesse oblige;* not radical virtue—since we are beginning to be bookish again.'

'To what do you reduce honour and right?' returned I.

'As I said to you on a memorable occasion,' she answered very drily, 'to a code.'

'That is,' rejoined I, 'a man does a good action, lives an honourable life, to satisfy a social canon—to gratify, say, a wife or mother, who believes in him, and loves him?'

'Yes.' She was watching Belle Treherne promenading with her father. She drew my attention to it by a slight motion of the hand, but why I could not tell.

'But might not a man fall by the same rule of vanity?' I urged. 'That he shall appear well in their eyes, that their vanity in turn should be fed, might he not commit a crime, and so bring misery?'

'Yes, it is true either way—pleasure or misery

Please come to the saloon and get me an ice before the next dance.'

I was perplexed. Was she altogether soulless? Even now, as we passed among the dancers, she replied to congratulations on her make-up and appearance with evident pleasure.

An hour later, I was taking Belle Treherne from the arm of Hungerford for the last waltz, and, in reply to an inquiring glance from him, I shook my head mournfully. His face showed solicitude as he walked away. Perhaps it did not gratify my vanity that Belle Treherne, as her father limped forward at the stroke of eight bells to take her below, said to me,—'How downright and thorough Mr. Hungerford is!' But I frankly admitted that he was all she might say good of him, and more.

The deck was quickly dismantled, the lights went out, and all the dancers disappeared. The masquerade was over; and again, through the darkness, rose the plaintive, 'All's well! And it kept ringing in my ears until it became a mocking sound, from which I longed to be free. It was like the voice of Lear crying over the body of Cordelia: 'Never, never, never, never, never!'

Something of Hungerford's superstitious feeling possessed me. I went below, and involuntarily made my way to Boyd Madras's cabin.

Though the night was not hot, the door was drawn to. I tapped. His voice at once asked who was there, and when I told him, and inquired how he was, he said he was not ill, and asked me to come to his cabin in the morning, if I would. I promised, and bade him good-night. He responded, and then, as I turned away from the door, I heard him repeat the good-night cordially and calmly.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WHEEL COMES FULL CIRCLE.

THE next morning I was up early, and went on deck. The sun had risen, and in the moist atmosphere the tints of sky and sea were beautiful. Everywhere was the warm ocean undulating lazily to the vague horizon. A few Lascars were still cleansing the decks; others were seated on their haunches between decks, eating curry from a calabash; a couple of passengers were indolently munching oranges; and Stone the quartermaster was inspecting the work lately done by the Lascars. Stone gave me a pleasant good-morning, and we walked together the length of the deck forward. I had got about three-fourths of the length back again, when I heard a cry from aft — a sharp call of, 'Man overboard!' In a moment I had travelled the intermediate deck, and was at the stern, looking below, where, in the swirling waters, was the head

of a man. With cries of, 'Man overboard!' I threw two or three buoys after the disappearing head, above which a bare arm thrust itself. I heard the rush of feet behind me, and in a moment Hungerford and Stone were beside me. The signal was given for the engines to stop; stewards and Lascars came running on deck in response to Hungerford's call, and the first officer now appeared. Very soon a crew was gathered on the after-deck about a boat on the port side.

Passengers by this time showed in various stages of dressing—women wringing their hands, men gesticulating. If there is anything calculated to send a thrill of awe through a crowd, it is the cry of, 'Man overboard!' And when one looked below, and saw above the drowning head two white arms thrust from the sea, a horrible thing was brought home to each of us. Besides, the scene before us on the deck was not reassuring. There was trouble in getting the boat lowered. The first officer was excited, the Lascars were dazed, the stewards were hurried without being confident; only Hungerford, Stone, and the gunner were collected. The boat should have been launched in a minute, but still it hung between its davits; its course downward was interrupted; something was wrong with the ropes. 'A false start, by——!' said

the bookmaker, looking through his eyeglass. Colonel Ryder's face was stern, Clovelly was pale and anxious, as moment after moment went, and the boat was not yet free. Ages seemed to pass before the boat was let down even with the bulwarks, and a crew of ten, with Hungerford in command, were in it, ready to be lowered. Whether the word was given to lower, or whether it was any one's fault, may never perhaps be known; but, as the boat hung there, suddenly it shot down at the stern, some one having let go the ropes at that end; and the bow being still fast, it had fallen like a trap-door. It seemed, on the instant, as if the whole crew were tossed into the water; but some had successfully clutched the boat's side, and Hungerford hung by a rope with one hand. In the eddying water, however, about the reversing crew, were two heads, and farther off was a man struggling. The face of one of the men near the screw was upturned for a moment; it was that of Stone the quartermaster.

A cry went up from the passengers, and they swayed forward to the suspended boat; but Colonel Ryder turned almost savagely upon them. 'Keep quiet!' he said. 'Stand back! What can you do? Give the officers a chance.' He knew

that there had been a false start, and bad work indeed; but he also saw that the task of the officers must not be made harder. His sternness had effect. The excited passengers drew back, and I took his place in front of them. When the first effort had been made to lower the boat, I asked the first officer if I could accompany the crew, but he said no. I could, therefore, do nothing but wait. A change came on the crowd. It became painfully silent, none speaking save in whispers, and all watching with anxious faces either the receding heads in the water or the unfortunate boat's crew. Hungerford showed himself a thorough sailor. Hanging to the davit, he quietly, reassuringly, gave the order for righting the boat, virtually taking the command out of the hands of the first officer, who was trembling with nervousness. Hungerford was right; this man's days as a sailor were over. The accident from which he had suffered had broken his nerve, stalwart as he was. But Hungerford was as cool as if this were ordinary boat-practice. Soon the boat was drawn up again, and others took the place of those who had disappeared. Then it was lowered safely, and, with Hungerford erect in the bows, it was pulled swiftly along the path we had come.

At length, too, the great ship turned round, but not in her tracks. It is a pleasant fiction that these great steamers are easily managed. They can go straight ahead, but their huge proportions are not adapted for rapid movement. However, the work of rescue was begun. Sailors were aloft on watch, Captain Ascott was on the bridge, sweeping the sea with his glass; order was restored. But the ship had the feeling of a home from which some familiar inmate had been taken, to return no more. Children clasped their mothers' hands and said,—'Mother, was it Stone the quartermaster?' and men who the day before had got help from the petty officers in the preparation of costumes, said mournfully,—'Fife the gunner was one of them.'

But who was the man first to go overboard? and who was it first gave the alarm? There were rumours, but no one was sure. All at once I remembered something peculiar in that cry of, 'Man overboard!' and it shocked me. I hurried below, and went to the cabin of Boyd Madras. It was empty; but on a shelf lay a large envelope, addressed to Hungerford and myself. I tore it open. There was a small packet, which I knew contained the portrait he had worn on his bosom, addressed to Mrs. Falchion; and the other was

a single sheet directed to me, fully written upon, and marked in the corner: 'To be made public.'

So, he had disappeared from the play? He had made his exit? He had satisfied the code at last?

Before opening the letter addressed to me, I looked round. His clothes were folded upon one of the berths; but the garments of masquerade were not in the cabin. Had he then gone out of the world in the garb of a mummer? Not altogether, for the false beard he had worn the night before lay beside the clothes. But this terrible earnestness of his would look strange in last night's disguise.

I opened the packet addressed to Hungerford and myself, and saw that it contained a full and detailed account of his last meeting with his wife. The personal letter was short. He said that his gratitude was unspeakable, and now must be so for ever. He begged us not to let the world know who he was, nor his relationship to Mrs. Falchion, unless she wished it; he asked me to hand privately to her the packet bearing her name. Lastly, he requested that the paper for the public be given to the captain of the *Fulvia*.

Going out into the passage, I found a steward, who hurriedly told me that just before the alarm

was given he had seen Boyd Madras going aft in that strange costume, which he mistook for a dressing-gown, and he had come to see if, by any chance, it was he who had gone overboard. I told him that it was. He disappeared, and soon the whole ship knew it. I went to the captain, gave him the letter, and told him only what was necessary to tell. He was on the bridge, and was occupied with giving directions, so he asked me the substance of the letter, and handed it back to me, requesting me to make a copy of it soon and leave it in his cabin. I then took all the papers to my cabin, and locked them up. I give here the substance of the letter which was to be made public :—

'Because you know how much I have suffered physically while on board this ship, and because you have been kind to me, I wish, through you, to say my last word to the world: though, indeed, this may seem a strange form for gratitude to take. Dying men, however, make few apologies, and I shall make none. My existence, as you know, is an uncertain quantity, and may be cut short at any moment in the ordinary course of things. But I have no future in the active concerns of life ; no past on which to dwell with satisfaction ; no friends to mourn for my misfortunes in life, nor for my death, whether it be peaceful or violent : therefore, I have fewer compunctions in ending a mistaken career and a worthless life.

'Some one will profit by my death : who it is matters not, for it is no friend of mine. My death adjusts a balance, perhaps not nicely, yet it does it. And this is all I have to say. . . . I am going. Farewell. . . .'

After a brief farewell to me added, there came

the subscription 'Charles Boyd;' and that was all. Why he cried out, 'Man overboard' (for now I recognised that it was his voice which gave the alarm), I do not know, except that he wished his body to be recovered, and to receive burial.

Just here, some one came fumbling at the curtain of my cabin. I heard a gasp—'Doctor—my head! Quick!'

I looked out. As I drew the curtain a worthless Lascar sailor fell fainting into my cabin. He had been drinking a good deal, and the horror and excitement of the accident had brought on an apoplectic fit. This in a very hot climate is suddenly fatal. In three miuutes, in spite of me, he was dead. Postponing report of the matter, I went on deck again among the passengers.

I expected that Mrs. Falchion would be among them, for the news must have gone to every part of the ship; but she was not there. On the outskirts of one of the groups, however, I saw Justine Caron. I went to her, and asked her if Mrs. Falchion had risen. She said that she had not: that she had been told of the disaster, and had appeared shocked; but had complained of a headache, and had not risen. I then asked Justine if Mrs. Falchion had been told who the suicide was, and was answered in the negative. At that moment a lady came to me and

said in an awed whisper: 'Dr. Marmion, is it true that the man who committed suicide was a second-class passenger, and that he appeared at the ball last night, and danced with Mrs. Falchion?'

I knew that my reply would soon become common property, so I said:

'He was a first-class passenger, though until yesterday he travelled second class. I knew him. His name was Charles Boyd. I introduced him to Mrs. Falchion last night, but he did not stay long on deck, because he felt ill. He had heart-trouble. You may guess that he was tired of life.' Then I told her of the paper which was for the public, and she left me.

The search for the unfortunate men went on. No one could be seen near the floating buoys which were here and there picked up by Hungerford's boat. The long undulations of the water had been broken up in a large area about the ship, but the sea was still comparatively smooth. We were steaming back along the track we had come. There was less excitement on board than might be expected. The tropical stillness of the air, the quiet suddenness of the tragedy itself, the grim decisiveness of Hungerford, the watchful silence of a few men like Colonel Ryder and Clovelly, had

effect upon even the emotion of those women, everywhere found, who get a morbid enjoyment out of misery.

Nearly all were watching the rescue boat, though a few looked over the sides of the ship as if they expected to find bodies floating about. They saw sharks instead, and a trail of blood, and this sent them away sickened from the bulwarks. Then they turned their attention again upon the rescue party. It was impossible not to note what a fine figure Hungerford made, as he stood erect in the bow, his hand over his eyes, searching the water. Presently we saw him stop the boat, and something was drawn in. He signalled the ship. He had found one man—but dead or alive? The boat was rapidly rowed back to the ship, Hungerford making efforts for resuscitation. Arrived at the vessel, the body was passed up to me.

It was that of Stone the quartermaster. I worked to bring back life, but it was of no avail. A minute after, a man in the yards signalled that he saw another. It was not a hundred yards away, and was floating near the surface. It was a strange sight, for the water was a vivid green, and the man wore garments of white and scarlet, and looked a part of some strange mosaic: as one has

seen astonishing figures set in balls of solid glass. This figure framed in the sea was Boyd Madras. The boat was signalled, it drew near, and two men dragged the body in, as a shark darted forward, just too late, to seize it. The boat drew alongside the *Fulvia*. I stood at the gangway to receive this castaway. I felt his wrist and heart. As I did so I chanced to glance up at the passengers, who were looking at this painful scene from the upper deck. There, leaning over the railing, stood Mrs. Falchion, her eyes fixed with a shocking wonder at the drooping weird figure. Her lips parted, but at first they made no sound. Then, she suddenly drew herself up with a shudder. 'Horrible! horrible!' she said, and turned away.

I had Boyd Madras taken to an empty cabin next to mine, which I used for operations, and there Hungerford and myself worked to resuscitate him. We allowed no one to come near. I had not much hope of bringing life back, but still we worked with a kind of desperation, for it seemed to Hungerford and myself that somehow we were responsible to humanity for him. His heart had been weak, but there had been no organic trouble: only some functional disorder, which open-air life and freedom from anxiety might have overcome. Hungerford worked with an almost fierce persist-

ence. Once he said: 'By God, I will bring him back, Marmion, to face that woman down when she thinks she has got the world on the hip!'

I cannot tell what delight we felt, when after a little time, I saw a quiver of the eyelids and a slight motion of the chest. Presently a longer breath came, and the eyes opened; at first without recognition. Then, in a few moments, I knew that he was safe—desperately against his will, but safe.

His first sentient words startled me. He gasped, 'Does she think I am drowned?'

'Yes.'

'Then, she must continue to do so!'

'Why?'

'Because'—here he spoke faintly, as if sudden fear had produced additional weakness—'because I had rather die a thousand deaths than meet her now; because she hates me. I must begin the world again. You have saved my life against my will: I demand that you give that life its only chance of happiness!'

As his words came to me, I remembered with a start the dead Lascar, and, leading Hungerford to my cabin, I pointed to the body, and whispered that the sailor's death was only known to me. 'Then this is the corpse of Boyd Madras, and we'll bury it for him,' he said with quick bluntness.

'Do not report this death to Captain Ascott—he would only raise objections to the idea. This Lascar was in my watch. It will be supposed he fell overboard during the accident to the boat. Perhaps some day the funeral of this nigger will be a sensation and surprise to her blessed ladyship on deck.'

I suggested that it seemed underhand and unprofessional, but the entreating words of the resuscitated man in the next room conquered my objections.

It was arranged that Madras should remain in the present cabin, of which I had a key, until we reached Aden; then he should, by Hungerford's aid, disappear.

We were conspirators, but we meant harm to nobody. I covered up the face of the dead Lascar and wrapped round him the scarlet and gold cloth that Madras had worn. Then I got a sailor, who supposed Boyd Madras was before him, and the body was soon sewed in its shotted shroud and carried to where Stone the quartermaster lay.

At this day I cannot suppose I would do these things, but then it seemed right to do as Boyd Madras wished: he was, under a new name, to begin life afresh.

After giving directions for the disposition of the

bodies, I went on deck. Mrs. Falchion was still there. Some one said to her,—'Did you know the man who committed suicide?'

'He was introduced to me last night by Dr. Marmion,' she replied, and she shuddered again, though her face showed no remarkable emotion. She had had a shock to the senses, not to the heart.

When I came to her on the deck, Justine was saying to her: 'Madame, you should not have come. You should not see such painful things when you are not well.'

She did not reply to this. She looked up at me and said: 'A strange whim, to die in those fanciful rags. It is dreadful to see; but he had the courage.'

I replied: 'They have as much courage who make men do such things and then live on.'

Then I told her briefly that I held the packet for her, that I guessed what was in it, and that I would hand it to her later. I also said that he had written to me the record of last night's meeting with her, and that he had left a letter which was to be made public. As I said these things we were walking the decks, and, because eyes were on both of us, I tried to show nothing more unusual in manner than the bare tragedy might account for.

'Well,' she said, with a curious coldness, 'what use shall you make of your special knowledge?'

'I intend,' I said, 'to respect his wish, that your relationship to him be kept unknown, unless you declare otherwise.'

'That is reasonable. If he had always been as reasonable! And,' she continued, 'I do not wish the relationship to be known: practically there is none. . . . Oh! oh!' she added, with a sudden change in her voice, 'why did he do as he did, and make everything else impossible? — impossible! . . . Send me, or give me, the packet when you wish: and now please leave me, Dr. Marmion.'

The last few words were spoken with some apparent feeling, but I knew she was thinking of herself most, and I went from her angry.

I did not see her again before the hour that afternoon when we should give the bodies of the two men to the ocean. No shroud could be prepared for gunner Fife and able-seaman Winter, whose bodies had no Christian burial, but were swallowed by the eager sea, not to be yielded up even for a few hours. We were now steaming far beyond the place where they were lost.

The burial was an impressive sight, as burials at sea mostly are. The lonely waters stretching to

the horizon helped to make it so. There was a melancholy majesty in the ceremony.

The clanging bell had stopped. Captain Ascott was in his place at the head of the rude draped bier. In the silence one only heard the *swish* of water against the *Fulvia's* side, as we sped on towards Aden. People do not know how beautiful, how powerful, is the burial service in the Book of Common Prayer, who have only heard it recited by a clergyman. To hear it read by a hardy man, whose life is among stern duties, is to receive a new impression. He knows nothing of lethargic monotone; he interprets as he reads. And when the man is the homespun captain of a ship, who sees before him the poor shell of one that served him for ten years,—'*The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord*,' has a strange significance. It is only men who have borne the shock of toil and danger, and have beaten up against the world's buffetings, that are fit to say last words over those gone down in the storm or translated in the fiery chariot of duty.

The engines suddenly stopped. The effect was weird. Captain Ascott's fingers trembled, and he paused for an instant and looked down upon the dead, then out sorrowfully to the waiting sea,

before he spoke the words, '*We therefore commit their bodies to the deep.*' But, the moment they were uttered, the bier was lifted, there was a swift plunge, and only the flag and the empty boards were left. The sobbing of women now seemed almost unnatural; for around us was the bright sunlight, the gay dresses of the Lascars, the sound of the bell striking the hours, and children playing on the deck. The ship moved on.

And Mrs. Falchion? As the burial service was read, she had stood, and looked, not at the bier, but straight out to sea, calm and apparently unsympathetic, though, as she thought, her husband was being buried. When, however, the weighted body divided the water with a *swingeing* sound, her face suddenly suffused, as though shame had touched her or some humiliating idea had come. But she turned to Justine almost immediately, and soon after said calmly: 'Bring a play of Molière, and read to me, Justine.'

I had the packet her supposed dead husband had left for her in my pocket. I joined her, and we paced the deck, at first scarcely speaking, while the passengers dispersed, some below, some to the smoking-rooms, some upon deck-chairs to doze through the rest of the lazy afternoon. The world had taken up its orderly course again. At

last, in an unfrequented corner of the deck, I took the packet from my pocket and handed it to her. 'You understand?' I said.

'Yes, I understand. And now, may I beg that *for the rest of your natural life*'—here she paused, and bit her lip in vexation that the unlucky phrase had escaped her—'you will speak of this no more?'

'Mrs. Boyd Madras,' I said (here she coloured indignantly),—'pardon me for using the name, but it is only this once,—I shall never speak of this to you again, nor to any one else, unless there is grave reason.'

We walked again in silence. Passing the captain's cabin, we saw a number of gentlemen gathered about the door, while others were inside. We paused, to find what the incident was. Captain Ascott was reading the letter which Boyd Madras had wished to be made public. (I had given it to him just before the burial, and he was acting as if Boyd Madras was really dead—he was quite ignorant of our conspiracy.) I was about to move on, but Mrs. Falchion touched my arm. 'Wait,' she said. She stood and heard the letter through. Then we walked on, she musing. Presently she said: 'It is a pity —a pity.'

I looked at her inquiringly, but she offered no

explanation of the enigmatical words. But, at this moment, seeing Justine waiting, she excused herself, and soon I saw her listening to Molière. Later in the day I saw her talking with Belle Treherne, and it struck me that she had never looked so beautiful as then, and that Belle Treherne had never seemed so perfect a product of a fine convention. But, watching them together, one who had had any standard of good life could never have hesitated between the two. It was plain to me that Mrs. Falchion was bent upon making a conquest of this girl who so delicately withstood her; and Belle Treherne has told me since, that, when in her presence, and listening to her, she was irresistibly drawn to her; though at the same time she saw there was some significant lack in her nature; some hardness impossible to any one who had ever known love. She also told me that on this occasion Mrs. Falchion did not mention my name, nor did she ever in their acquaintance, save in the most casual fashion. Her conversation with Belle Treherne was always far from petty gossip or that smart comedy in which some women tell much personal history, with the guise of badinage and bright cynicism. I confess though, it struck me unpleasantly at the time, that this fresh, high-hearted creature should be in familiar conversation

with a woman who, it seemed to me, was the incarnation of cruelty.

Mrs. Falchion subscribed most liberally to the fund raised for the children of the quartermaster and munificently to that for the crew which had, under Hungerford, performed the rescue work. The only effect of this was to deepen the belief that she was very wealthy, and could spend her money without affectation; for it was noticeable that she, of all on board, showed the least outward excitement at the time of the disaster. It occurred to me that once or twice I had seen her eyes fixed on Hungerford inquisitively, and not free from antipathy. It was something behind her usual equanimity. Her intuitive observation had led her to trace his hand in recent events. Yet I know she admired him too for his brave conduct. The day following the tragedy we were seated at dinner. The captain and most of the officers had risen, but Mrs. Falchion, having come in late, was still eating, and I remained seated also. Hungerford approached me, apologising for the interruption. He remarked that he was going on the bridge, and wished to say something to me before he went. It was an official matter, to which Mrs. Falchion apparently did not listen. When he was about to turn away, he bowed to her rather distantly; but she

looked up at him and said, with an equivocal smile:

'Mr. Hungerford, we often respect brave men whom we do not like.'

And he, understanding her, but refusing to recognise the compliment, not altogether churlishly replied: 'And I might say the same of women, Mrs. Falchion; but there are many women we dislike who are not brave.'

'I think I could recognise a brave man without seeing his bravery,' she urged.

'But I am a blundering sailor,' he rejoined, 'who only believes his eyes.'

'You are young yet,' she replied.

'I shall be older to-morrow,' was his retort.

'Well, perhaps you will see better to-morrow, she rejoined, with indolent irony.

'If I do, I'll acknowledge it,' he added.

Then Hungerford smiled at me inscrutably.

We two held a strange secret.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BRIDGE OF PERIL.

NO more delightful experience may be had than to wake up in the harbour of Aden some fine morning—it is always fine there—and get the first impression of that mighty fortress, with its thousand iron eyes, in strong repose by the Arabian Sea. Overhead was the cloudless sun, and everywhere the tremulous glare of a sandy shore and the creamy wash of the sea, like fusing opals. A tiny Mohammedan mosque stood gracefully where the ocean almost washed its steps, and the Resident's house, far up the hard hillside, looked down upon the harbour from a green coolness. The place had a massive, war-like character. Here was a battery with earth-works; there, a fort; beyond, a signal-staff. Hospitals, hotels, and stores were incidents in the picture. Beyond the mountain-wall and lofty

Jebel Shamsan, rising in fine pink and bronze, and at the end of a high-walled path between the great hills, lay the town of Aden proper. Above the town again were the mighty Tanks, formed out of clefts in the mountains, and built in the times when the Phoenicians made Aden a great mart, the richest spot in all Arabia.

Over to the left, on the opposite side of the harbour, were wide bungalows shining in the sun, and flanking the side of the ancient aqueduct, the gigantic tomb of an Arab sheikh. In the harbour were the men-of-war of all nations, and Arab dhows sailed slowly in, laden with pilgrims for Mecca—masses of picturesque sloth and dirt—and disease also; for more than one vessel flew the yellow flag. As we looked, a British man-of-war entered the gates of the harbour in the rosy light. It was bringing back the disabled and wounded from a battle, in which a handful of British soldiers were set to punish thirty times their number in an unknown country. But there was another man-of-war in port with which we were familiar. We passed it far out on the Indian Ocean. It again passed us, and reached Aden before we did. The *Porcupine* lay not far from the *Fulvia*, and as I leaned over the bulwarks, idly looking at

her, a boat shot away from her side, and came towards us. As it drew near, I saw that it was filled with luggage—a naval officer's, I knew it to be. As the sailors hauled it up, I noticed that the initials upon the portmanteaus were G. R. The owner was evidently an officer going home on leave, or invalided. It did not, however, concern me, as I thought, and I turned away to look for Mr. Treherne, that I might fulfil my promise to escort his daughter and Mrs. Callendar to the general cemetery at Aden; for I knew he was not fit to do the journey, and there was nothing to prevent my going.

A few hours later I stood with Miss Treherne and Mrs. Callendar in the graveyard beside the fortress-wall, placing wreaths of artificial flowers and one or two natural roses—a chance purchase from a shop at the port—on the grave of the young journalist. Miss Treherne had brought some sketching materials, and both of us (for, as has been suggested, I had a slight gift for drawing) made sketches of the burial-place. Having done this, we moved away to other parts of the cemetery, looking at the tombstones, many of which told sad tales enough of those who died far away from home and friends. As we wandered on, I noticed a woman kneeling

beside a grave. It grew upon me that the figure was familiar. Presently I saw who it was, for the face lifted. I excused myself, went over to her, and said,—'Miss Caron, you are in trouble?'

She looked up, her eyes swimming with tears and pointed to the tombstone. On it I read—

Sacred to the Memory of
HECTOR CARON,
Ensign in the French Navy.

Erected by his friend, Galt Roscoe,
of H.B.M.N.

Beneath this was the simple line—

'Why, what evil hath he done?'

'He was your brother?' I asked.

'Yes, monsieur, my one brother.' Her tears dropped slowly.

'And Galt Roscoe, who was he?' asked I.

Through her grief her face was eloquent. 'I never saw him—never knew him,' she said. 'He saved my poor Hector from much suffering; he nursed him, and buried him here when he died, and then —that!'—pointing to the tombstone. 'He made me love the English,' she said. 'Some day I shall find him, and I shall have money to pay him back all he spent—all!'

Now I guessed the meaning of the scene on board the *Fulvia*, when she had been so anxious to preserve her present relations with Mrs. Falchion. This was the secret, a beautiful one. She rose. 'They disgraced Hector in New Caledonia,' she said, 'because he refused to punish a convict at Ile Nou who did not deserve it. He determined to go to France to represent his case. He left me behind, because we were poor. He went to Sydney. There he came to know this good man,'—her finger gently felt his name upon the stone,—'who made him a guest upon his ship; and so he came on towards England. In the Indian Ocean he was taken ill: and this was the end.'

She mournfully sank again beside the grave, but she was no longer weeping.

'What was this officer's vessel?' I said presently.

She drew from her dress a letter. 'It is here. Please read it all. He wrote that to me when Hector died.'

The superscription to the letter was—*H.B.M.S. Porcupine.* I might have told her then that the *Porcupine* was in the harbour at Aden, but I felt that things would work out to due ends without my help—which, indeed, they began to do imme-

diately. As we stood there in silence, I reading over and over again the line upon the pedestal, I heard footsteps behind, and, turning, I saw a man approaching us, who, from his manner, though he was dressed in civilian's clothes, I guessed to be an officer of the navy. He was of more than middle height, had black hair, dark blue eyes, straight, strongly-marked brows, and was clean-shaven. He was a little ascetic-looking, and rather interesting and uncommon, and yet he was unmistakably a sea-going man. It was a face that one would turn to look at again and again—a singular personality. And yet my first glance told me that he was not one who had seen much happiness. Perhaps that was not unattractive in itself, since people who are very happy, and show it, are often most selfish too, and repel where they should attract. He was now standing near the grave, and his eyes were turned from one to the other of us, at last resting on Justine.

Presently I saw a look of recognition. He stepped quickly forward. 'Mademoiselle, will you pardon me?' he said very gently, 'but you remind me of one whose grave I came to see.' His hand made a slight motion towards Hector Caron's resting-place. Her eyes were on him

with an inquiring earnestness. 'Oh, monsieur, is it possible that you are my brother's friend and rescuer?'

'I am Galt Roscoe. He was my good friend,' he said to her, and he held out his hand. She took it, and kissed it reverently. He flushed, and drew it back quickly and shyly.

'Some day I shall be able to repay you for all your goodness,' she said. 'I am only grateful now —grateful altogether. And you will tell me all you knew of him—all that he said and did before he died?'

'I will gladly tell you all I know,' he answered, and he looked at her compassionately, and yet with a little scrutiny, as though to know more of her and how she came to be in Aden. He turned to me inquiringly.

I interpreted his thought by saying,—'I am the surgeon of the *Fulvia*. I chanced upon Miss Caron here. She is travelling by the *Fulvia*.'

With a faint voice, Justine here said: 'Travelling —with my mistress.'

'As companion to a lady,' I preferred to add in explanation, for I wished not to see her humble herself so.

A look of understanding came into Roscoe's face.

Then he said: 'I am glad that I shall see more of you; I am to travel by the *Fulvia* also to London.'

'Yet I am afraid I shall see very little of you,' she quietly replied.

He was about to say something to her, but she suddenly swayed and would have fallen, but that he caught her and supported her. The weakness lasted only for a moment, and then, steadying herself, she said to both of us,—'I hope you will say nothing of this to madame? She is kind, most kind, but she hates illness—and such things.'

Galt Roscoe looked at me to reply, his face showing clearly that he thought 'madame' an extraordinary woman. I assured Justine that we would say nothing. Then Roscoe cordially parted from us, saying that he would look forward to seeing us both on the ship; but before he finally went, he put on the grave a small bouquet from his buttonhole. Then I excused myself from Justine, and, going over to Belle Treherne, explained to her the circumstances, and asked her if she would go and speak to the afflicted girl. She and Mrs. Callendar had been watching the incident, and they eagerly listened to me. I think this was the

moment that I first stood really well with Belle Treherne. Her sympathy for the bereaved girl flooded many barriers between herself and me.

'Oh,' she said quickly, 'indeed I will go to her, poor girl! Will you come also, Mrs. Callendar?'

But Mrs. Callendar timidly said she would rather Miss Treherne went without her; and so it was. While Belle Treherne was comforting the bereaved girl, I talked to Mrs. Callendar. I fear that Mrs. Callendar was but a shallow woman; for, after a moment of excitable interest in Justine, she rather naïvely turned the talk upon the charms of Europe. And, I fear, not without some slight cynicism, I followed her where she led; for, as I said to myself, it did not matter what direction our idle tongues took, so long as I kept my mind upon the two beside that grave: but it gave my speech a spice of malice. I dwelt upon Mrs. Callendar's return to her native heath — that is, the pavements of Bond Street and Piccadilly, although I knew that she was a native of Tasmania. At this she smiled egregiously.

At length Belle Treherne came to us and said that Justine insisted she was well enough to go back to the vessel alone, and wished not to be accompanied. So we left her there.

A score of times I have stopped when preparing my notes for this tale from my diary and those of Mrs. Falchion and Galt Roscoe, to think how, all through the events recorded here, and many others omitted, Justine Caron was like those devoted and, often, beautiful attendants of the heroes and heroines of tragedy, who, when all is over, close the eyes, compose the bodies, and cover the faces of the dead, pronouncing with just lips the benediction, fittest in their mouths. Their loves, their deeds, their lives, however good and worthy, were clothed in modesty and kept far up the stage, to be, even when everything was over, not always given the privilege to die as did their masters, but, like Horatio, bade to live and be still the loyal servant—

> 'But in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
> To tell my story.'

There was no reason why we should go to the ship immediately, and I proposed that we should first explore the port-town, and then visit the city of Aden—five miles away beyond the hills—and the Tanks. To this the ladies consented.

Somauli policemen patrolled the streets; Somauli, Arab, and Turkish guides impeded the way; Arabs in plain white, Arab sheikhs in blue and white, and

gold, lounged languidly about, or drank their coffee in the shade of the bazaars. Children of the desert, nearly naked, sprinkled water before the doors of the bazaars and stores and upon the hot thoroughfare, from long leather bottles; caravans of camels, with dusty stride, swung up the hillside and beyond into the desert; the Jewish water-carrier with his donkey trudged down the pass from the cool fountains in the volcanic hills; a guard of eunuchs marched by with the harem of a Mohammedan; in the doorways of the houses goats and donkeys fed. Jews, with greasy faces, red-hemmed skirt, and hungry look, moved about, offering ostrich feathers for sale, everywhere treated worse than the Chinaman in Oregon or at Port Darwin. We saw English and Australian passengers of the *Fulvia* pelting the miserable members of a despised race with green fruit about the streets, and afterwards from the deck of the ship. A number of these raised their hats to us as they passed; but Belle Treherne's acknowledgment was chilly.

'It is hard to be polite to cowards,' she said.

After having made some ruinous bargains in fezes, Turkish cloths and perfume, I engaged a trap, and we started for Aden. The journey was not one of beauty, but it had singular interest. Every turn of

the wheels carried us farther and farther away from a familiar world to one of yesterday. White-robed warriors of the desert, with lances, bent their bows upon us as they rode away towards the endless sands, and vagabonds of Egypt begged for alms. In about three-quarters of an hour we had passed the lofty barriers of Jebel Shamsan and its comrades, and were making clouds of dust in the streets of Aden. In spite of the cantonments, the British Government House, and the European Church, it was an Oriental town pure and simple, where the slow-footed hours wandered by, leaving apathy in their train; where sloth and surfeit sat in the market-places; idle women gossiped in their doorways; and naked children rolled in the sun. Yet how, in the most unfamiliar places, does one wake suddenly to hear or see some most familiar thing, and learn again that the ways of all people and nations are not, after all, so far apart! —Here three naked youths, with trays upon their heads, cried aloud at each doorway what, interpreted, was, 'Pies! *Hot* pies! Pies all *hot!*' or, 'Crum-*pet!* Crum-*pet!* Won't you buy-uy a crum-*pet!*'

One sees the same thing in Kandy, in Calcutta, in Tokio, in Istamboul, in Teheran, in Queensland, in London.

To us the great Tanks overlooking the place were more interesting than the town itself, and we drove thither. At Government House and here were the only bits of green that we had seen; they were, in fact, the only spots of verdure on the peninsula of Aden. It was a very sickly green, from which wan and dusty fig trees rose. In their scant shadow, or in the shelter of an overhanging ledge of rock, Arabs offered us draughts of cool water, and oranges. There were people in the sickly gardens, and others were inspecting the Tanks. Passengers from the ship had brought luncheon-baskets to this sad oasis.

As we stood at the edge of one of the Tanks, Belle Treherne remarked with astonishment that they were empty. I explained to her that Aden did not have the benefits conferred even on the land of the seven fat and seven lean kine—that there had not been rain there for years, and that when it did come it was neither prolonged nor plentiful. Then came questions as to how long ago the Tanks were built.

'Thirteen hundred years!' she said. 'How strange to feel it so! It is like looking at old graves. And how high the walls are, closing up the gorge between the hills!'

At that moment Mrs. Callendar drew our attention to Mrs. Falchion and a party from the ship. Mrs. Falchion was but a few paces from us, smiling agreeably as she acknowledged our greetings. Presently two of her party came to us and asked us to share their lunch. I would have objected, and I am certain Belle Treherne would gladly have done so, but Mrs. Callendar was anxious to accept, therefore we expressed our gratitude and joined the group. On second thoughts I was glad that we did so, because, otherwise, my party must have been without refreshments until they returned to the ship—the restaurants at Aden are not to be trusted. To me Mrs. Falchion was pleasantly impersonal, to Belle Treherne delicately and actively personal. At the time I had a kind of fear of her interest in the girl, but I know now that it was quite sincere, though it began with a motive not very lofty—to make Belle Treherne her friend, and so annoy me, and also to study, as would an anatomist, the girl's life.

We all moved into the illusive shade of the fig and magnolia trees, and lunch was soon spread. As we ate, conversation turned upon the annoying persistency of Eastern guides, and reference was made to the exciting circumstances attending

the engagement of Amshar, the guide of Mrs. Falchion's party. Among a score of claimants, Amshar had had one particular opponent — a personal enemy — who would not desist even when the choice had been made. He, indeed, had been the first to solicit the party, and was rejected because of his disagreeable looks. He had even followed the trap from the Port of Aden. As one of the gentlemen was remarking on the muttered anger of the disappointed Arab, Mrs. Falchion said,—'There he is now at the gate of the garden.'

His look was sullenly turned upon our party. Blackburn the Queenslander said,—'Amshar, the other fellow is following up the game,' and pointed to the gate.

Amshar understood the gesture at least, and though he gave a toss of his head, I noticed that his hand trembled as he handed me a cup of water, and that he kept his eyes turned on his opponent.

'One always feels unsafe with these cut-throat races,' said Colonel Ryder, 'as some of us know, who have had to deal with the nigger of South America. They think no more of killing a man——'

'Than an Australian squatter does of *dispersing* a mob of aboriginals or kangaroos,' said Clovelly.

Here Mrs. Callendar spoke up briskly. 'I don't know what you mean by "dispersing."'

'You know what a kangaroo battue is, don't you?'

'But that is killing, slaughtering kangaroos by the hundred.'

'Well, and that is aboriginal dispersion,' said the novelist. 'That is the aristocratic method of legislating the native out of existence.'

Blackburn here vigorously protested. 'Yes, it's very like a novelist, on the hunt for picturesque events, to spend his forensic soul upon "the poor native,"—upon the dirty nigger, I choose to call him: the meanest, cruellest, most cowardly, and murderous—by Jove, what a lot of adjectives!—of native races. But we chaps, who have lost some of the best friends we ever had—chums with whom we've shared blanket and tucker—by the crack of a nulla-nulla in the dark, or a spear from the scrub, can't find a place for Exeter Hall and its "poor native" in our hard hearts. We stand in such a case for justice. It is a new country. Not once in fifty times would law reach them. Reprisal and dispersion were the only things possible

to men whose friends had been massacred, and —well, they punished tribes for the acts of individuals.'

Mrs. Falchion here said convincingly: 'That is just what England does. A British trader is killed. She sweeps a native town out of existence with Hotchkiss guns—leaves it naked and dead. That is dispersion too; I have seen it, and I know how far niggers as a race can be trusted, and how much they deserve sympathy. I agree with Mr. Blackburn.'

Blackburn raised his glass. 'Mrs. Falchion,' he said, 'I need no further evidence to prove my case. Experience is the best teacher.'

'As I wish to join the chorus to so notable a compliment, will somebody pass the claret?' said Colonel Ryder, shaking the crumbs of a *pâté* from his coat-collar. When his glass was filled, he turned towards Mrs. Falchion, and continued: 'I drink to the health of the best teacher!' And every one laughingly responded. This impromptu toast would have been drunk with more warmth, if we could have foreseen an immediate event. Not less peculiar were Mrs. Falchion's words to Hungerford the evening before, recorded in the last sentence of the preceding chapter.

Cigars were passed, and the men rose and strolled away. We wandered outside the gardens, passing the rejected guide as we did so. 'I don't like the look in his eye,' said Clovelly.

Colonel Ryder laughed. 'You've always got a fine vision for the dramatic.'

We passed on. I suppose about twenty minutes had gone when, as we were entering the garden again, we heard loud cries. Hurrying forward towards the Tanks, we saw a strange sight.

There, on a narrow wall dividing two great tanks, were three people—Mrs. Falchion, Amshar, and the rejected Arab guide. Amshar was crouching behind Mrs. Falchion, and clinging to her skirts in abject fear. The Arab threatened with a knife. He could not get at Amshar without thrusting Mrs. Falchion aside, and, as I said, the wall was narrow. He was bent like a tiger about to spring.

Seeing Mrs. Falchion and Amshar apart from the others,—Mrs. Falchion having insisted on crossing this narrow and precipitous wall,—he had suddenly rushed after them. As he did so, Belle Treherne saw him, and cried out. Mrs. Falchion faced round swiftly, and then came this tragic situation.

Some one must die.

Seeing that Mrs. Falchion made no effort to dislodge Amshar from her skirts, the Arab presently leaped forward. Mrs. Falchion's arms went out suddenly, and she caught the wrist that held the dagger. Then there was an instant's struggle. It was Mrs. Falchion's life now, as well as Amshar's. They swayed. They hung on the edge of the rocky chasm. Then we lost the gleam of the knife, and the Arab shivered, and toppled over. Mrs. Falchion would have gone with him, but Amshar caught her about the waist, and saved her from the fall which would have killed her as certainly as it killed the Arab lying at the bottom of the tank. She had managed to turn the knife in the Arab's hand against his own breast, and then suddenly pressed her body against it; but the impulse of the act came near carrying her over also.

Amshar was kneeling at her feet, and kissing her gown gratefully. She pushed him away with her foot, and, coolly turning aside, began to arrange her hair. As I approached her, she glanced down at the Arab. 'Horrible! horrible!' she said. I remembered that these were her words when her husband was lifted from the sea to the *Fulvia*.

She, not ungently, refused my hand or any

assistance, and came down among the rest of the party. I could not but feel a strange wonder at the powerful side of her character just shown—her courage, her cool daring. In her face now there was a look of annoyance, and possibly disgust, as well as of triumph—so natural in cases of physical prowess. Everybody offered congratulations, but she only showed real pleasure, and that mutely, at those of Belle Treherne. To the rest of us she said: 'One had to save one's self, and Amshar was a coward.'

And so this woman, whose hardness of heart and excessive cruelty Hungerford and I were keeping from the world, was now made into a heroine, around whom a halo of romance would settle whenever her name should be mentioned. Now, men, eligible and ineligible, would increase their homage. It seemed as if the stars had stopped in their courses to give her special fortune.

That morning I had thought her appearance at this luncheon-party was little less than scandalous, for she knew, if others did not, who Boyd Madras was. After the occurrence with the Arab, the other event was certainly much less prominent, and here, after many years, I can see that the act was less in her than it would have been in others.

For, behind her outward hardness, there was a sort of justice working, an iron thing, but still not unnatural in her.

Belle Treherne awakened also to a new perception of her character, and a kind of awe possessed her, so masculine seemed her courage, yet so womanly and feminine her manner. Mrs. Callendar was loud in her exclamations of delight and wonder at Mrs. Falchion's coolness; and the bookmaker, with his usual impetuosity, offered to take bets at four to one that we should all be detained to give evidence in the matter.

Clovelly was silent. He occasionally adjusted his glasses, and looked at Mrs. Falchion as if he had suddenly come to a full stop in his opinions regarding her. This, I think, was noticed by her, and enjoyed too, for she doubtless remembered her conversation with me, in which she had said that Clovelly thought he understood her perfectly. Colonel Ryder, who was loyal at all times, said she had the nerve of a woman from Kentucky. Moreover, he had presence of mind, for he had immediately sent off a native to inform the authorities of what had occurred; so that before we had got half way to the town we were met by policemen running towards us, followed by a small detachment of

Indian soldiers. The officer in command of the detachment stopped us, and said that the governor would be glad if we would come to Government House for an hour, while an inquiry was being held.

To this we cheerfully consented, of course; and, in a room where punkahs waved and cool claret-cup awaited us, we were received by the governor who was full of admiration of Mrs. Falchion. It was plain, however, that he was surprised at her present equanimity. Had she no nerves at all?

'I can only regret exceedingly,' said the governor, 'that your visit to Aden has had such a tragical interruption; but since it has occurred, I am glad to have the privilege of meeting a lady so brave as Mrs. Falchion.'—The bookmaker had introduced us all with a *naïveté* that, I am sure, amused the governor, as it certainly did his *aide-de-camp*.—'We should not need to fear the natives if we had soldiers as fearless,' his excellency continued.

At this point the inquiry began, and, after it was over, the governor said that there the matter ended so far as we were concerned, and then he remarked gallantly that the Government of Aden would always remain Mrs. Falchion's debtor. She replied that it was a debt she would be glad to

preserve unsettled for ever. After this pretty exchange of compliments, the governor smiled, and offered her his arm to the door, where our *char à bans* awaited us.

So impressed was the bookmaker with the hospitable reception the governor had given us, that he offered him his cigar-case with its contents, said he hoped they would meet again, and asked his excellency if he thought of coming to Australia. The governor declined the cigars graciously, ignored the hoped-for pleasure of another meeting, and trusted that it might fall to his lot to visit Australia some day. Thereupon the bookmaker insisted on the *aide-de-camp* accepting the cigar-case, and gave him his visiting-card. The *aide-de-camp* lost nothing by his good-humoured acceptance, if he smoked, because, as I knew, the cigars were very good indeed. Bookmakers, gamblers and Jews are good judges of tobacco. And the governor's party lost nothing in dignity because, as the traps wheeled away, they gave a polite little cheer for Mrs. Falchion. I, at first, was fearful how Belle Treherne would regard the *gaucheries* of the bookmaker, but I saw that he was rather an object of interest to her than otherwise; for he was certainly amusing.

As we drove through Aden, a Somauli lad ran from the door of a house, and handed up a letter to the driver of my trap. It bore my name, and was handed over to me. I recognised the handwriting. It was that of Boyd Madras. He had come ashore by Hungerford's aid in the night. The letter simply gave an address in England that would always find him, and stated that he intended to take another name.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PROGRESS OF THE SUNS.'

NEWS of the event had preceded us to the *Fulvia*, and, as we scrambled out on the ship's stairs, cheers greeted us. Glancing up, I saw Hungerford, among others, leaning over the side, and looking at Mrs. Falchion in a curious cogitating fashion, not unusual to him. The look was non-committal, yet earnest. If it was not approval, it was not condemnation; but it might have been slightly ironical, and that annoyed me. It seemed impossible for him—and it was so always, I believe—to get out of his mind the thought of the man he had rescued on No Man's Sea. I am sure it jarred upon him that the band foolishly played a welcome when Mrs. Falchion stepped on the deck. As I delivered Belle Treherne into the hands of her father, who was anxiously awaiting us, Hungerford said in my ear,—'A tragedy queen, Marmion!' He said it

so distinctly that Mrs. Falchion heard it, and she gave him a searching look. Their eyes met and warred for a moment, and then he added: 'I remember! Yes, I can respect the bravery of a woman whom I do not like.'

'And this is *to-morrow*,' she said, 'and a man may change his mind, and that may be fate—or a woman's whim.' She bowed, turned away, and went below, evidently disliking the reception she had had, and anxious to escape inquiries and congratulations. Nor did she appear again until the *Fulvia* got under way about six o'clock in the evening. As we moved out of the harbour we passed close to the *Porcupine*, and saw its officers grouped on the deck, waving adieus to some one on our deck, whom I guessed, of course, to be Galt Roscoe.

At this time Mrs. Falchion was standing near me.

'For whom is that demonstration?' she said.

'For one of her officers, who is a passenger by the *Fulvia*,' I replied. 'You remember we passed the *Porcupine* in the Indian Ocean?'

'Yes, I know that very well,' she said, with a shade of meaning. 'But'—here I thought her voice had a touch of breathlessness—'but

who is the officer? I mean, what is his name?'

'He stands in the group near the door of the captain's cabin, there. His name is Galt Roscoe, I think.'

A slight exclamation escaped her. There was a chilly smile on her lips, and her eyes sought the group until it rested on Galt Roscoe. In a moment she said,—'You have met him?'

'In the cemetery this morning, for the first time.'

'Everybody seems to have had business this morning at the cemetery. Justine Caron spent hours there. To me it is so foolish, heaping up a mound, and erecting a tombstone over—what?—a dead thing, which, if one could see it, would be dreadful.'

'You would prefer complete absorption—as of the ocean?' I brutally retorted.

She appeared not to notice the innuendo. 'Yes, what is gone is gone. Graves are idolatry. Gravestones are ghostly. It is people without imagination who need these things, together with crape and black-edged paper. It is all barbaric ritual. I know you think I am callous, but I cannot help that. For myself, I wish the earth close about me, and level green grass above

me, and no one knowing of the place; or else, fire or the sea.'

'Mrs. Falchion,' said I, 'between us there need be no delicate words. You appear to have neither imagination, nor idolatry, nor remembrances, nor common womanly kindness.'

'Indeed!' she said. 'Yet you might know me better.' Here she touched my arm with the tips of her fingers, and, in spite of myself, I felt my pulse beat faster. It seemed to me that in her presence, even now, I could not quite trust myself. 'Indeed!' she repeated. 'And who made you omniscient, Dr. Marmion? You hardly do yourself justice. You hold a secret. You insist on reminding me of the fact. Is that in perfect gallantry? Do you know me altogether, from your knowledge of that one thing? You are vain. Or does the secret wear on you, and—Mr. Hungerford? Was it necessary to seek *his* help in keeping it?'

I told her then the true history of Hungerford's connection with Boyd Madras, and also begged her pardon for showing just now my knowledge of her secret. At this she said: 'I suppose I should be grateful,' and was there a slightly softer cadence to her voice?

'No, you need not be grateful,' I said. 'We are

silent, first, because he wished it; then because you are a woman.'

'You define your reasons with astonishing care and taste,' she replied.

'Oh, as to taste!——' said I; but then I bit my tongue.

At that she said, her lips very firm and pale,—'I could not pretend to a grief I did not feel. I acted no lie. He died as we had lived — estranged. I put up no memorials.'

But I, thinking of my mother lying in her grave, a woman after God's own heart, who loved me more than I deserved, repeated almost unconsciously these lines (clipped from a magazine):—

'Sacred the ring, the faded glove,
Once worn by one we used to love;
Dead warriors in their armour live,
And in their relics saints survive.

'Oh, Mother Earth, henceforth defend
All thou hast garnered of my friend,
From winter's wind and driving sleet,
From summer's sun and scorching heat.

'Within thine all-embracing breast
Is hid one more forsaken nest;
While, in the sky, with folded wings,
The bird that left it sits and sings.'

I paused; the occasion seemed so little suited to

the sentiment, for around us was the idle excitement of leaving port. I was annoyed with myself for my share in the conversation so far. Mrs. Falchion's eyes had scarcely left that group around the captain's door, although she had appeared acutely interested in what I was saying. Now she said:

'You recite very well. I feel impressed, but I fancy it is more your voice than those fine sentiments; for, after all, you cannot glorify the dead body. Look at the mummy of Thothmes at Boulak, and think what Cleopatra must look like now. And please let us talk about something else. Let us——' She paused.

I followed the keen, shaded glance of her eyes, and saw, coming from the group by the captain's door, Galt Roscoe. He moved in our direction. Suddenly he paused. His look was fixed upon Mrs. Falchion. A flush passed over his face, not exactly confusing, but painful, and again it left him pale, and for a moment he stood motionless. Then he came forward to us. He bowed to me, then looked hard at her. She held out her hand.

'Mr. Galt Roscoe, I think?' she said. 'An old friend,' she added, turning to me. He gravely took her extended hand, and said:

'I did not think to see you here, Miss——'

'*Mrs.* Falchion,' she interrupted clearly.

'*Mrs.* Falchion!' he said, with surprise. 'It is so many years since we had met, and——'

'And it is so easy to forget things? But it isn't so many, really—only seven, the cycle for constitutional renewal. Dear me, how erudite that sounds! . . . So, I suppose, we meet the same, yet not the same.'

'The same, yet not the same,' he repeated after her, with an attempt at lightness, yet abstractedly.

'I think you gentlemen know each other?' she said.

'Yes; we met in the cemetery this morning. I was visiting the grave of a young French officer.'

'I know,' she said,—'Justine Caron's brother. She has told me; but she did not tell me your name.'

'She has told you?' he said.

'Yes. She is — my companion.' I saw that she did not use the word that first came to her.

'How strangely things occur! And yet,' he added musingly, 'I suppose, after all, coincidence is not so strange in these days of much

travel, particularly with people whose lives are connected—more or less.'

'Whose lives are connected — more or less, she repeated after him, in a steely tone.

It seemed to me that I had received my cue to leave. I bowed myself away, and went about my duties. As we steamed bravely through the Straits of Babelmandeb, with Perim on our left, rising lovely through the milky haze, I came on deck again, and they were still near where I had left them an hour before. I passed, glancing at them as I did so. They did not look towards me. His eyes were turned to the shore, and hers were fixed on him. I saw an expression on her lips that gave her face new character. She was speaking, as I thought, clearly and mercilessly. I could not help hearing her words as I passed them.

'You are going to be that—*you!*' There was a ring of irony in her tone. I heard nothing more in words, but I saw him turn to her somewhat sharply, and I caught the deep notes of his voice as he answered her. When, a moment after, I looked back, she had gone below.

Galt Roscoe had a seat at Captain Ascott's table, and I did not see anything of him at meal-times, but elsewhere I soon saw him a great deal. He appeared to seek my company. I was glad of

this, for I found that he was an agreeable man, and had distinct originality of ideas, besides being possessed of very considerable culture. He also had that social *aplomb* so much a characteristic of the naval officer. Yet, man of the world as he was, he had a strain of asceticism which puzzled me. It did not make him eccentric, but it was not a thing usual with the naval man. Again, he wished to be known simply as Mr. Roscoe, not as Captain Roscoe, which was his rank. He said nothing about having retired, yet I guessed he had done so. One evening however, soon after we had left Aden, we were sitting in my cabin, and the conversation turned upon a recent novel dealing with the defection of a clergyman of the Church of England through agnosticism. The keenness with which he threw himself into the discussion, and the knowledge he showed, surprised me. I knew (as most medical students get to know, until they know better) some scientific objections to Christianity, and I put them forward. He clearly and powerfully met them. I said at last, laughingly: 'Why, you ought to take holy orders.'

'That is what I am going to do,' he said very seriously, 'when I get to England. I am resigning the navy.' At that instant there flashed through

my mind Mrs. Falchion's words, 'You are going to be that—*you!*'

Then he explained to me that he had been studying for two years, and expected to go up for deacon's orders soon after his return to England. I cannot say that I was greatly surprised, for I had known a few, and had heard of many, men who had exchanged the navy for the Church. It struck me, however, that Galt Roscoe appeared to view the matter from a standpoint not professional; the more so, that he expressed his determination to go to the newest part of a new country, to do the pioneer work of the Church. I asked him where he was going, and he said to the Rocky Mountains of Canada. I told him that my destination was Canada also. He warmly expressed the hope that we should see something of each other there. This friendship of ours may seem to have been hastily hatched, but it must be remembered that the sea is a great breeder of friendship. Two men who have known each other for twenty years find that twenty days at sea bring them nearer than ever they were before, or else estrange them.

It was on this evening that, in a lull of the conversation, I casually asked him when he had known Mrs. Falchion. His face was in-

scrutable, but he said somewhat hurriedly, 'In the South Sea Islands,' and then changed the subject. So, there was some mystery again? Was this woman never to be dissociated from enigma? In those days I never could think of her save in connection with some fatal incident in which she was scatheless, and some one else suffered.

It may have been fancy, but I thought that, during the first day or two after leaving Aden, Galt Roscoe and Mrs. Falchion were very little together. Then the impression grew that this was his doing, and again that she waited with confident patience for the time when he would seek her — because he could not help himself. Often when other men were paying her devoted court I caught her eyes turned in his direction, and I thought I read in her smile a consciousness of power. And so it was. Very soon he was at her side. But I also noticed that he began to look worn—that his conversation with me lagged. I think that at this time I was so much occupied with tracing personal appearances to personal influences that I lost to some degree the physician's practical keenness. My eyes were to be opened. He appeared to be suffering, and she seemed to unbend to him

more than she ever unbent to me, or any one else on board. Hungerford seeing this, said to me one day in his blunt way: 'Marmion, old Ulysses knew what he was about when he tied himself to the mast.'

But the routine of the ship went on as before. Fortunately, Mrs. Falchion's heroism at Aden had taken the place of the sensation attending Boyd Madras's suicide. Those who tired of thinking of both, became mildly interested in Red Sea history. Chief among these was the bookmaker. As an historian the bookmaker was original. He cavalierly waved aside all such confusing things as dates: made Moses and Mahomet contemporaneous, incidentally referred to King Solomon's visits to Cleopatra, and with sad irreverence spoke of the Exodus and the destruction of Pharaoh's horses and chariots as 'the big handicap.' He did not mean to be irreverent or unhistorical. He merely wished to enlighten Mrs. Callendar, who said he was very original, and quite clever at history. His really startling points, however, were his remarks upon the colours of the mountains of Egypt and the sunset tints to be seen on the Red Sea and the Suez Canal. To him the grey, and pink, and melancholy gold only brought up visions of

a race at Epsom or Flemington — generally Flemington, where the staring Australian sun pours down on an emerald course, on a score of horses straining upon the start, the colours of the jockeys' coats and caps changing in the struggle like a kaleidoscope, and making strange harmonies of colour. The comparison between the mountains of Egypt and a racecourse might seem most absurd, if one did not remember that the bookmaker had his own standards, and that he thought he was paying unusual honour to the land of the Fellah. Clovelly plaintively said, as he drank his hock and seltzer, that the bookmaker was hourly saving his life ; and Colonel Ryder admitted at last that Kentucky never produced anything quite like him.

The evening before we came to the Suez Canal I was walking with Belle Treherne and her father. I had seen Galt Roscoe in conversation with Mrs. Falchion. Presently I saw him rise to go away. A moment after, in passing, I was near her. She sprang up, caught my arm, and pointed anxiously. I looked, and saw Galt Roscoe swaying as he walked.

'He is ill—ill!' she said.

I ran forward and caught him as he was falling. Ill? Of course he was ill. What a fool I had

been! Five minutes with him assured me that he had fever. I had set his haggard appearance down to some mental trouble—and I was going to be a professor in a medical college!

Yet I know now that a troubled mind hastened the fever.

CHAPTER X.

BETWEEN DAY AND DARK.

FROM the beginning Galt Roscoe's fever was violent. It had been hanging about him for a long time, and was the result of malarial poisoning. I devoutly wished that we were in the Mediterranean instead of the Red Sea, where the heat was so great; but fortunately we should soon be there. There was no other case of sickness on board, and I could devote plenty of time to him. Offers of assistance in nursing were numerous, but I only encouraged those of the bookmaker, strange as this may seem; yet he was as gentle and considerate as a woman in the sickroom. This was on the first evening of his attack. After that, I had reasons for dispensing with his generous services. The night after Roscoe was taken ill we were passing through the Canal, the search-light of the *Fulvia* sweeping the path ahead of it, and glorifying everything it touched. Mud barges were fairy palaces; Arab punts

beautiful gondolas; the ragged Egyptians on the banks became picturesque; and the desolate country behind them had a wide vestibule of splendour. I stood for half an hour watching this scene, then I went below to Roscoe's cabin and relieved the bookmaker. The sick man was sleeping from the effects of a sedative draught. The bookmaker had scarcely gone when I heard a step behind me, and I turned and saw Justine Caron standing timidly at the door, her eyes upon the sleeper. She spoke quietly.

'Is he very ill?'

I answered that he was, but also that for some days I could not tell how dangerous his illness might be. She went to the berth where he lay, the reflected light from without playing weirdly on his face, and smoothed the pillow gently.

'If you are willing, I will watch for a time,' she said. 'Everybody is on deck. Madame said she would not need me for a couple of hours. I will send a steward for you if he wakes; you need rest yourself.'

That I needed rest was quite true, for I had been up all the night before; still I hesitated. She saw my hesitation, and added:

'It is not much that I can do, still I should like

to do it. I can at least watch.' Then, very earnestly, 'He watched beside Hector.'

I left her with him, her fingers moving the small bag of ice about his forehead to allay the fever, and her eyes patiently regarding him. I went on deck again. I met Belle Treherne and her father. They both inquired for the sick man, and I told Belle—for she seemed much interested—the nature of such malarial fevers, the acute forms they sometimes take, and the kind of treatment required. She asked several questions, showing a keen understanding of my explanations, and then, after a moment's silence, said meditatively: 'I think I like men better when they are doing responsible work; it is difficult to be idle—and important too.'

I saw very well that, with her, I should have to contend for a long time against those first few weeks of dalliance on the *Fulvia.*

Clovelly joined us, and for the first time—if I had not been so egotistical it had appeared to me before—I guessed that his somewhat professional interest in Belle Treherne had developed into a very personal thing. And with that thought came also the conception of what a powerful antagonist he would be. For it improves some men to wear glasses; and Clovelly had a delightful, wheedling

tongue. It was allusive, contradictory (a thing pleasing to women), respectful yet playful, bold yet reverential. Many a time I have longed for Clovelly's tongue. Unfortunately for me, I learned some of his methods without his art; and of this I am occasionally reminded at this day. A man like Clovelly is dangerous as a rival when he is not in earnest; when he *is* in earnest, it becomes a lonely time for the other man—unless the girl is perverse.

I left the two together, and moved about the deck, trying to think closely about Roscoe's case, and to drive Clovelly's invasion from my mind. I succeeded, and was only roused by Mrs. Falchion's voice beside me.

'Does he suffer much?' she murmured.

When answered, she asked nervously how he looked,—it was impossible that she should consider misery without shrinking. I told her that he was only flushed and haggard as yet and that he was little wasted. A thought flashed to her face. She was about to speak, but paused. After a moment, however, she remarked evenly,—'He is likely to be delirious?'

'It is probable,' I replied.

Her eyes were fixed on the search-light. The look in them was inscrutable. She continued

quietly: 'I will go and see him, if you will let me. Justine will go with me.'

'Not now,' I replied. 'He is sleeping. To-morrow, if you will.'

I did not think it necessary to tell her that Justine was at that moment watching beside him. We walked the deck together in silence.

'I wonder,' she said, 'that you care to walk with me. Please do not make the matter a burden.'

She did not say this with any invitation to courteous protest on my part, but rather with a cold frankness — for which, I confess, I always admired her. I said now: 'Mrs. Falchion, you have suggested what might easily be possible in the circumstances, but I candidly admit that I have never yet found your presence disagreeable; and I suppose that is a comment upon my weakness. Though, to speak again with absolute truth, I think I do not like you at this present.'

'Yes, I fancy I can understand that,' she said. 'I can understand how, for instance, one might feel a just and great resentment, and have in one's hand the instrument of punishment, and yet withhold one's hand, and protect where one should injure.'

At this moment these words had no particular significance to me, but there chanced a time when they came home with great force. I think, indeed, that she was speaking more to herself than to me. Suddenly she turned to me.

'I wonder,' she said, 'if I am as cruel as you think me—for, indeed, I do not know. But I have been through many things.'

Here her eyes grew cold and hard. The words that followed seemed in no sequence. 'Yet,' she said, 'I will go and see him to-morrow. . . . Good-night.'

After about an hour I went below to Galt Roscoe's cabin. I drew aside the curtain quietly. Justine Caron evidently had not heard me. She was sitting beside the sick man, her fingers still smoothing away the pillow from his fevered face, and her eyes fixed on him. I spoke to her. She rose. 'He has slept well,' she said. And she moved to the door.

'Miss Caron,' I said, 'if Mrs. Falchion is willing, you could help me to nurse Mr. Roscoe?'

A light sprang to her eyes. 'Indeed, yes,' she said.

'I will speak to her about it, if you will let me?'

She bowed her head, and her look was eloquent

of thanks. After a word of good-night, we parted.

I knew that nothing better could occur to Galt Roscoe than that Justine Caron should help to nurse him. This would do far more for him than medicine—the delicate care of a woman than many pharmacopœias.

Hungerford had insisted on relieving me for a couple of hours at midnight. He said it would be a good preparation for going on the bridge at three o'clock in the morning. About half-past two he came to my cabin and waked me, saying,—'He is worse—delirious; you had better come.'

He was indeed delirious. Hungerford laid his hand on my shoulder. 'Marmion,' said he, 'that woman is in it. Like the devil, she is ubiquitous. Mr. Roscoe's past is mixed up with hers somehow. I don't suppose men talk absolute history in delirium, but there is no reason, I fancy, why they shouldn't paraphrase. I should reduce the number of nurses to a *minimum* if I were you.'

A determined fierceness possessed me at the moment. I said to him: 'She shall nurse him, Hungerford,—she, and Justine Caron, and myself.'

Plus Dick Hungerford,' he added. 'I don't know quite how you intend to work this thing, but you have the case in your hands, and what you've told me about the French girl shows that she is to be trusted. But as for myself, Marmion M.D., I'm sick—sick—sick of this woman, and all her words and works. I believe that she has brought bad luck to this ship; and it's my last voyage on it; and—and I begin to think you're a damned good fellow—excuse the insolence of it; and—good-night!'

For the rest of the night I listened to Galt Roscoe's wild words. He tossed from side to side, and murmured brokenly. Taken separately, and as they were spoken, his words might not be very significant, but pieced together, arranged, and interpreted through even scant knowledge of circumstances, they were sufficient to give me a key to difficulties which, afterwards, were to cause much distress. I arrange some of the sentences here to show how startling were the fancies—or remembrances—that vexed him.

'But I was coming back—I was coming back—I tell you I should have stayed with her forever. . . . See how she trembles!—Now her breath is gone—There is no pulse—Her heart is still—My God! her heart is still!—Hush! cover her face. . . .

Row hard, you devils!—A hundred dollars if you make the point in time. . . . Whereaway?—Whereaway?—Steady now!—Let them have it across the bows!—Low! low!—fire low! . . . She is dead—she is dead!'

These things he would say over and over again breathlessly, then he would rest a while, and the trouble would begin again. 'It was not I that did it—no, it was not I!—She did it herself!—She plunged it in, deep, deep, deep!—You made me a devil! . . . Hush! I *will* tell!—I know you—yet—Mercy—Mercy—Falchion!——'

Yes, it was best that few should enter his cabin. The ravings of a sick man are not always counted ravings, no more than the words of a well man are always reckoned sane. At last I got him into a sound sleep, and by that time I was thoroughly tired out. I called my own steward, and asked him to watch for a couple of hours while I rested. I threw myself down and slept soundly for an hour beyond that time, the steward having hesitated to wake me.

By that time we had passed into the fresher air of the Mediterranean, and the sea was delightfully smooth. Galt Roscoe still slept, though his temperature was high.

My conference with Mrs. Falchion after breakfast was brief, but satisfactory. I told her frankly that Roscoe had been delirious, that he had mentioned her name, and that I thought it best to reduce the number of nurses and watchers. I made my proposition about Justine Caron. She shook her head a little impatiently, and said that Justine had told her, and that she was quite willing. Then I asked her if she would not also assist. She answered immediately that she wished to do so. As if to make me understand why she did it, she added: 'If I did not hear the wild things he says, some one else would; and the difference is that I understand them, and the some one else would interpret them with the genius of the writer of a fairy book.'

And so it happened that Mrs. Falchion came to sit many hours a day beside the sick couch of Galt Roscoe, moistening his lips, cooling his brow, giving him his medicine. After the first day, when she was, I thought, alternating between innate disgust of misery and her womanliness and humanity, —in these days more a reality to me,—she grew watchful and silently solicitous at every turn of the malady. What impressed me most was that she was interested and engrossed more, it seemed,

in the malady than in the man himself. And yet she baffled me even when I had come to this conclusion.

During most of his delirium she remained almost impassive, as if she had schooled herself to be calm and strong in nerve; but one afternoon she did a thing that upset all my opinions of her for a moment. Looking straight at her with staring, unconscious eyes, he half rose in his bed, and said in a low, bitter tone: 'I hate you!—I once loved you—but I hate you now!' Then he laughed scornfully, and fell back on the pillow. She had been sitting very quietly, musing. His action had been unexpected, and had broken upon a silence. She rose to her feet quickly, gave a sharp indrawn breath, and pressed her hand against her side, as if a sudden pain had seized her. The next moment, however, she was composed again, and said in explanation that she had been half asleep, and he had startled her. But I had seen her under what seemed to me more trying conditions, and she had not shown any nervousness such as this.

The passengers, of course, talked. Many 'true histories' of Mrs. Falchion's devotion to the sick man were abroad; but it must be said, however, that all of them were romantically creditable to

her. She had become a rare product even in the eyes of Belle Treherne, and more particularly her father, since the matter at the Tanks. Justine Caron was slyly besieged by the curious, but they went away empty; for Justine, if very simple and single-minded, was yet too much concerned for both Galt Roscoe and Mrs. Falchion to give the inquiring the slightest clue. She knew, indeed, little herself, whatever she may have guessed. As for Hungerford, he was dumb. He refused to consider the matter. But he roundly maintained once or twice, without any apparent relevance, that a woman was like a repeating decimal — you could follow her, but you never could reach her. He usually added to this,— '*Minus* one, Marmion,' meaning thus to exclude the girl who preferred him to any one else. When I ventured to suggest that Belle Treherne might also be excepted, he said, with maddening suggestion: 'She lets Mrs. Falchion fool her, doesn't she? And she isn't quite sure the splendour of a medical professor's position is superior to that of an author.'

In these moments, although I tried to smile on him, I hated him a little. I sought to revenge myself on him by telling him to help himself to a cigar, having first placed the box of *Mexicans*

near him. He invariably declined them, and said he would take one of the others from the tea-box—my very best, kept in tea for sake of dryness. If I reversed the process he reversed his action. His instinct regarding cigars was supernatural, and I almost believe that he had—like the Black Dwarf's cat—the 'poo'er' of reading character and interpreting events—an uncanny divination.

I knew by the time we reached Valetta that Roscoe would get well; but he recognised none of us until we arrived at Gibraltar. Justine Caron and myself had been watching beside him. As the bells clanged to 'slow down' on entering the harbour, his eyes opened with a gaze of sanity and consciousness. He looked at me, then at Justine.

'I have been ill?' he said.

Justine's eyes were not entirely to be trusted. She turned her head away.

'Yes, you have been very ill,' I replied, 'but you are better.'

He smiled feebly, adding: 'At least, I am grateful that I did not die at sea.' Then he closed his eyes. After a moment he opened them, and said, looking at Justine: 'You have helped to nurse me, have you not?' His wasted fingers moved over the counterpane towards her.

'I could do so little,' she murmured.

'You have more than paid your debt to me.' he gently replied. 'For I live, you see, and poor Hector died.'

She shook her head gravely, and rejoined: 'Ah no, I can never pay the debt I owe to you and to God—now.'

He did not understand this, I know. But I did.

'You must not talk any more,' I said to him.

But Justine interposed. 'He must be told that the nurse who has done most for him is Mrs. Falchion.'

His brows contracted as if he were trying to remember something. He moved his head wearily.

'Yes, I think I remember,' he said, 'about her being with me, but nothing clearly — nothing clearly. She is very kind.'

Justine here murmured: 'Shall I tell her?'

I was about to say no; but Roscoe nodded, and said quietly, 'Yes, yes.'

Then I made no objection, but urged that the meeting should only be for a moment. I determined not to leave them alone even for that moment. I did not know what things connected

with their past — whatever it was — might be brought up, and I knew that entire freedom from excitement was necessary. I might have spared myself any anxiety on the point. When she came she was perfectly self-composed, and more as she seemed when I first knew her, though I will admit that I thought her face more possible to emotion than in the past.

It seems strange to write of a few weeks before as the past; but so much had occurred that the days might easily have been months and the weeks years.

She sat down beside him and held out her hand. And as she did so, I thought of Boyd Madras and of that long last night of his life, and of her refusal to say to him one comforting word, or to touch his hand in forgiveness and friendship. And was this man so much better than Boyd Madras? His wild words in delirium might mean nothing, but if they meant anything, and she knew of that anything, she was still a heartless, unnatural woman, as I had once called her.

Roscoe took her hand and held it briefly. 'Dr. Marmion says that you have helped to nurse me through my illness,' he whispered. 'I am most grateful.'

I thought she replied with the slightest constraint in her voice. 'One could not let an old acquaintance die without making an effort to save him.'

At that instant I grew scornful, and longed to tell him of her husband. But then a husband was not an acquaintance. I ventured instead: 'I am sorry, but I must cut short all conversation for the present. When he is a little better, he will be benefited by your brightest gossip, Mrs. Falchion.'

She rose smiling, but she did not again take his hand, though I thought he made a motion to that end. But she looked down at him steadily for a moment. Beneath her look his face flushed, and his eyes grew hot with light; then they dropped, and the eyelids closed on them. At that she said, with an incomprehensible airiness,—'Good-night. I am going now to play the music of *La Grande Duchesse* as a farewell to Gibraltar. They have a concert on to-night.'

And she was gone.

At the mention of *La Grande Duchesse* he sighed, and turned his head away from her. What it all meant I did not know, and she had annoyed me as much as she had perplexed me; her moods

were like the chameleon's colours. He lay silent for a long time, then he turned to me and said: 'Do you remember that tale in the Bible about David and the well of Bethlehem?' I had to confess my ignorance.

'I think I can remember it,' he continued. And though I urged him not to tax himself, he spoke slowly thus:

'*And David was in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem.*

'*And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem that is at the gate!*

'*And the three brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and took and brought it to David; nevertheless, he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord.*

'*And he said, My God forbid it me that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink it.*'

He paused a moment, and then added: 'One always buys back the past at a tremendous price. Resurrections give ghosts only.'

'But you must sleep now,' I urged. And then,

because I knew not what else more fitting, I added: 'Sleep, and

"Let the dead past bury its dead."'

'Yes, I will sleep,' he answered.

END OF BOOK I.

BOOK II.

THE SLOPE OF THE PACIFIC.

CHAPTER XI.

AMONG THE HILLS OF GOD.

'YOUR letters, sir,' said my servant, on the last evening of the college year. Examinations were over at last, and I was wondering where I should spend my holidays. The choice was very wide; ranging from the Muskoka lakes to the Yosemite Valley. Because it was my first year in Canada, I really preferred not to go beyond the Dominion. With these thoughts in my mind I opened my letters. The first two did not interest me; tradesmen's bills seldom do. The third brought a thumping sensation of pleasure—though it was not from Belle Treherne. I had had one from her that morning, and this was a pleasure which never

came twice in one day, for Prince's College, Toronto, was a long week's journey from London, S.W. Considering, however, that I did receive letters from her once a week, it may be concluded that Clovelly did not; and that, if he had, it would have been by a serious infringement of my rights. But, indeed, as I have learned since, Clovelly took his defeat in a very characteristic fashion, and said on an important occasion some generous things about me.

The letter that pleased me so much was from Galt Roscoe, who, as he had intended, was settled in a new but thriving district of British Columbia, near the Cascade Mountains. Soon after his complete recovery he had been ordained in England, had straightway sailed for Canada, and had gone to work at once. This note was an invitation to spend the holiday months with him, where, as he said, a man 'summering high among the hills of God' could see visions and dream dreams, and hunt and fish too—especially fish. He urged that he would not talk parish concerns at me; that I should not be asked to be godfather to any young mountaineers; and that the only drawback, so far as my own predilections were concerned, was the monotonous health of the people. He described his summer cottage of red pine as being built on the edge of a lovely ravine; he said that he had

the Cascades on one hand with their big glacier fields, and mighty pine forests on the other; while the balmiest breezes of June awaited 'the professor of pathology and genial saw-bones. At the end of the letter he hinted something about a pleasant little secret for my ear when I came; and remarked immediately afterwards that there were one or two delightful families at Sunburst and Viking, villages in his parish. One naturally associated the little secret with some member of one of these delightful families. Finally, he said he would like to show me how it was possible to transform a naval man into a parson.

My mind was made up. I wrote to him that I would start at once. Then I began to make preparations, and meanwhile fell to thinking again about him who was now the Reverend Galt Roscoe. After the *Fulvia* reached London I had only seen him a few times, he having gone at once into the country to prepare for ordination. Mrs. Falchion and Justine Caron I had met several times, but Mrs. Falchion forbore inquiring for Galt Roscoe: from which, and from other slight but significant mattters, I gathered that she knew of his doings and whereabouts. Before I started for Toronto she said that she might see me there some day, for she was going to San Francisco to

inspect the property her uncle had left her, and in all probability would make a sojourn in Canada. I gave her my address, and she then said she understood that Mr. Roscoe intended taking a missionary parish in the wilds. In his occasional letters to me while we all were in England Roscoe seldom spoke of her, but, when he did, showed that he knew of her movements. This did not strike me at the time as anything more than natural. It did later.

Within a couple of weeks I reached Viking, a lumbering town with great saw-mills, by way of San Francisco and Vancouver. Roscoe met me at the coach, and I was taken at once to the house among the hills. It stood on the edge of a ravine, and the end of the verandah looked over a verdant precipice, beautiful but terrible too. It was uniquely situated; a nest among the hills, suitable either for work or play. In one's ears was the low, continuous din of the rapids, with the music of a neighbouring waterfall.

On the way up the hills I had a chance to observe Roscoe closely. His face had not that sturdy buoyancy which his letter suggested. Still, if it was pale, it had a glow which it did not possess before, and even a stronger humanity than of old. A new look had come into his

eyes, a certain absorbing earnestness, refining the past asceticism. A more amiable and unselfish comrade man never had.

The second day I was there he took me to call upon a family at Viking, the town with a great saw-mill and two smaller ones, owned by James Devlin, an enterprising man who had grown rich at lumbering, and who lived here in the mountains many months in each year. Mr. James Devlin had a daughter who had had some advantages in the East after her father had become rich, though her earlier life was spent altogether in the mountains. I soon saw where Roscoe's secret was to be found. Ruth Devlin was a tall girl of sensitive features, beautiful eyes, and rare personality. Her life, as I came to know, had been one of great devotion and self-denial. Before her father had made his fortune, she had nursed a frail-bodied, faint-hearted mother, and had cared for, and been a mother to, her younger sisters. With wealth and ease came a brighter bloom to her cheek, but it had a touch of care which would never quite disappear, though it became in time a beautiful wistfulness rather than anxiety. Had this responsibility come to her in a city, it might have spoiled her beauty and robbed her of her youth altogether; but in the sustaining virtue of a life

in the mountains, warm hues remained on her cheek and a wonderful freshness in her nature. Her family worshipped her—as she deserved.

That evening Roscoe confided to me that he had not asked Ruth Devlin to be his wife, nor had he, indeed, given her definite tokens of his love. But the thing was in his mind as a happy possibility of the future. We talked till midnight, sitting at the end of the verandah overlooking the ravine. This corner, called the coping, became consecrated to our many conversations. We painted and sketched there in the morning (when we were not fishing or he was not at his duties), received visitors, and smoked in the evening, inhaling the balsam from the pines. An old man and his wife kept the house for us, and gave us to eat of simple but comfortable fare. The trout-fishing was good, and many a fine trout was broiled for our evening meal; and many a fine string of trout found its way to the tables of Roscoe's poorest parishioners, or else to furnish the more fashionable table at which Ruth Devlin presided. There were excursions up the valley, and picnics on the hillsides, and occasional lunches and evening parties at the summer hotel, a mile from us farther down the valley, at which tourists were beginning to assemble.

Yet, all the time, Roscoe was abundantly faithful to his duties at Viking and in the settlement called Sunburst, which was devoted to salmon-fishing. Between Viking and Sunburst there was a great jealousy and rivalry; for the salmon-fishers thought that the mills, though on a tributary stream, interfered, by the sawdust spilled in the river, with the travel and spawning of the salmon. It needed all the tact of both Mr. Devlin and Roscoe to keep the places from open fighting. As it was, the fire smouldered. When Sunday came however, there seemed to be truce between the villages. It appeared to me that one touched the primitive and idyllic side of life: lively, sturdy, and simple, with nature about us at once benignant and austere. It is impossible to tell how fresh bracing, and inspiring was the climate of this new land. It seemed to glorify humanity, to make all who breathed it stalwart, and almost pardonable even in wrong-doing. Roscoe was always received respectfully, and even cordially, among the salmon-fishers of Sunburst, as among the mill-men and river-drivers of Viking: not the less so, because he had an excellent faculty for machinery, and could talk to the people in their own colloquialisms. He had besides, though there was little exuberance in his nature, a gift of dry humour,

which did more than anything else, perhaps, to make his presence among them unrestrained. His little churches at Viking and Sunburst were always well attended — often filled to overflowing — and the people gave liberally to the offertory: and I never knew any clergyman, however holy, who did not view such a proceeding with a degree of complacency. In the pulpit Roscoe was almost powerful. His knowledge of the world, his habits of directness, his eager but not hurried speech, his unconventional but original statements of things, his occasional literary felicity and unusual tact, might have made him distinguished in a more cultured community. Yet there was something to modify all this: an occasional indefinable sadness, a constant note of pathetic warning. It struck me that I never had met a man whose words and manner were at times so charged with pathos; it was artistic in its searching simplicity. There was some unfathomable fount in his nature which was even beyond any occurrence of his past; some radical, constitutional sorrow, coupled with a very strong, practical, and even vigorous nature.

One of his most ardent admirers was a gambler, horse-trader, and watch-dealer, who sold him a horse, and afterwards came and offered him thirty dollars, saying that the horse was worth that much

less than Roscoe had paid for it, and protesting that he never could resist the opportunity of getting the best of a game. He said he did not doubt but that he would do the same with one of the archangels. He afterwards sold Roscoe a watch at cost, but confessed to me that the works of the watch had been smuggled. He said he was so fond of the parson that he felt he had to give him a chance of good things. It was not uncommon for him to discourse of Roscoe's quality in the bar-rooms of Sunburst and Viking, in which he was ably seconded by Phil Boldrick, an eccentric, warm-hearted fellow, who was so occupied in the affairs of the villages generally, and so much an advisory board to the authorities, that he had little time left to progress industrially himself.

Once when a noted bully came to Viking, and, out of sheer bravado and meanness, insulted Roscoe in the streets, two or three river-drivers came forward to avenge the insult. It was quite needless, for the clergyman had promptly taken the case in his own hands. Waving them back, he said to the bully,—'I have no weapon, and if I had, I could not take your life, nor try to take it; and you know that very well. But I propose to meet your insolence—the first shown me in this town.'

Here murmurs of approbation went round.

'You will, of course, take the revolver from your pocket, and throw it on the ground.'

A couple of other revolvers were looking the bully in the face, and he sullenly did as he was asked.

'You have a knife: throw that down.'

This also was done under the most earnest emphasis of the revolvers. Roscoe calmly took off his coat. 'I have met such scoundrels as you on the quarter-deck,' he said, 'and I know what stuff is in you. They call you beachcombers in the South Seas. You never fight fair. You bully women, knife natives, and never meet any one in fair fight. You have mistaken your man this time.'

He walked close up to the bully, his face like steel, his thumbs caught lightly in his waistcoat pockets; but it was noticeable that his hands were shut.

'Now,' he said, 'we are even as to opportunity. Repeat, if you please, what you said a moment ago.'

The bully's eye quailed, and he answered nothing.

'Then, as I said, you are a coward and a cur, who insults peaceable men and weak women. If I know Viking right, it has no room for you.' Then he picked up his coat, and put it on.

'Now,' he added, 'I think you had better go;—but I leave that to the citizens of Viking.'

What they thought is easily explained. Phil Boldrick speaking for all, said: 'Yes, you had better go—quick; but on the hop like a cur, mind you: on your hands and knees, jumping all the way.'

And, with weapons menacing him, this visitor to Viking departed, swallowing as he went the red dust disturbed by his hands and feet.

This established Roscoe's position finally. Yet, with all his popularity and the solid success of his work, he showed no vanity or egotism, nor ever traded on the position he held in Viking and Sunburst. He seemed to have no ambition further than to do good work; no desire to be known beyond his own district; no fancy, indeed, for the communications of his labours to mission papers and benevolent ladies in England—so much the habit of his order. He was free from professional mannerisms.

One evening we were sitting in the accustomed spot—that is, the coping. We had been silent for a long time. At last Roscoe rose, and walked up and down the verandah nervously.

'Marmion,' said he, 'I am disturbed to-day, I cannot tell you how: a sense of impending evil, an anxiety.'

I looked up at him inquiringly, and, of purpose, a little sceptically.

He smiled something sadly and continued: 'Oh, I know you think it foolishness. But remember that all sailors are more or less superstitious: it is bred in them; it is constitutional, and I am afraid there's a good deal of the sailor in me yet.'

Remembering Hungerford, I said: 'I know that sailors are superstitious, the most seasoned of them are that. But it means nothing. I may think or feel that there is going to be a plague, but I should not enlarge the insurance on my life because of it.'

He put his hand on my shoulder and looked down at me earnestly. 'But, Marmion, these things, I assure you, are not matters of will, nor yet morbidness. They occur at the most unexpected times. I have had such sensations before, and they were followed by strange matters.'

I nodded, but said nothing. I was still thinking of Hungerford. After a slight pause he continued somewhat hesitatingly:

'I dreamed last night, three times, of events that occurred in my past; events which I hoped would never disturb me in the life I am now leading.'

'A life of self-denial,' ventured I. I waited a

minute, and then added: 'Roscoe, I think it only fair to tell you—I don't know why I haven't done so before—that when you were ill you were delirious, and talked of things that may or may not have had to do with your past.'

He started, and looked at me earnestly.

'They were unpleasant things?'

'Trying things; though all was vague and disconnected,' I replied.

'I am glad you tell me this,' he remarked quietly. 'And Mrs. Falchion and Justine Caron—did they hear?' He looked off to the hills.

'To a certain extent, I am sure. Mrs. Falchion's name was generally connected with—your fancies. . . . But really no one could place any weight on what a man said in delirium, and I only mention the fact to let you see exactly on what ground I stand with you.'

'Can you give me an idea—of the thing I raved about?'

'Chiefly about a girl called Alo,—*not your wife*, I should judge—who was killed.'

At that he spoke in a dry voice: 'Marmion, I will tell you all the story some day; but not now. I hoped that I had been able to bury it, even in memory, but I was wrong. Some things—such things—never die. They stay; and in our

cheerfulest, most peaceful moments confront us, and mock the new life we are leading. There is no refuge from memory and remorse in this world. The spirits of our foolish deeds haunt us, with or without repentance.' He turned again from me and set a sombre face towards the ravine.

'Roscoe,' I said, taking his arm, 'I cannot believe that you have any sin on your conscience, so dark that penitence cannot wipe out, that is not wiped out now.'

'God bless you for your confidence. But there is one woman who, I fear, could, if she would, disgrace me before the world. You understand,' he added, 'that there are things we repent of which cannot be repaired. One thinks a sin is dead, and starts upon a new life, locking up the past, not deceitfully, but believing that the book is closed, and that no good can come of publishing it; when suddenly it all flames out like the letters in Faust's book of conjurations.'

'Wait,' I said. 'You need not tell me more, you must not—now; not until there is any danger. Keep your secret. If the woman—if *that* woman —ever places you in danger, then tell me all. But keep it to yourself now. And don't fret because you have had dreams.'

'Well, as you wish,' he replied after a long time.

As he sat in silence, I smoking hard, and he buried in thought, I heard the laughter of people some distance below us in the hills. I guessed it to be some tourists from the summer hotel. The voices came nearer. A singular thought occurred to me. I looked at Roscoe. I saw that he was brooding, and was not noticing the voices, which presently died away. This was a relief to me. We were then silent again.

CHAPTER XII.

THE WHIRLIGIG OF TIME.

NEXT day we had a picnic on the Whi-Whi River,[1] which, rising in the far north, comes in varied moods to join the Long Cloud River at Viking. Ruth Devlin, her young sister, and her aunt Mrs. Revel, with Galt Roscoe and myself, constituted the party. The first part of the excursion had many delights. The morning was fresh and sweet, and we were all in excellent spirits. Roscoe's depression had vanished; but there was an amiable seriousness in his manner which, to me, portended that the faint roses in Ruth Devlin's cheeks would deepen before the day was done, unless something inopportune happened.

As we trudged gaily up the cañon to the spot

[1] Dr. Marmion, in a note of his MSS., says that he has purposely changed the names of the rivers and towns mentioned in the second part of the book, because he does not wish the *locale* to be too definite.—G. P.

where we were to take a big skiff, and cross the Whi-Whi to our camping-ground, Ruth Devlin, who was walking with me, said: 'A large party of tourists arrived at Viking yesterday, and have gone to the summer hotel; so I expect you will be gay up here for some time to come. Prepare, then, to rejoice.'

'Don't you think it is gay enough as it is?' I answered. 'Behold this festive throng.'

'Oh, it is nothing to what there might be. This could never make Viking and "surrounding country" notorious as a pleasure resort. To attract tourists you must have enough people to make romances and tragedies,—without loss of life, of course,—merely catastrophes of broken hearts, and hair-breadth escapes, and mammoth fishing and shooting achievements, such as men know how — to invent,' — it was delightful to hear her voice soften to an amusing suggestiveness,—'and broken bridges and land-slides, with many other things which you can supply, Dr. Marmion. No, I am afraid that Viking is too humdrum to be notable.'

She laughed then very lightly and quaintly. She had a sense of humour.

'Well, but, Miss Devlin,' said I, 'you cannot have all things at once. Climaxes like these take time

We have a few joyful things. We have splendid fishing achievements, — please do not forget that basket of trout I sent you the other morning,— and broken hearts and such tragedies are not impossible; as, for instance, if I do not send you as good a basket of trout to-morrow evening; or if you should remark that there was nothing in a basket of trout to——'

'Now,' she said, 'you are becoming involved and —inconsiderate. Remember, I am only a mountain girl.'

'Then let us only talk of the other tragedies. But are you not a little callous to speak of such things as if you thirsted for their occurrence?'

'I am afraid you are rather silly,' she replied. 'You see, some of the land up here belongs to me. I am anxious that it should "boom,"—that is the correct term, is it not?—and a sensation is good for "booming." What an advertisement would ensue if the lovely daughter of an American millionaire should be in danger of drowning in the Long Cloud, and a rough but honest fellow—a foreman on the river, maybe a young member of the English aristocracy in disguise — perilled his life for her! The place of peril would, of course, be named Lover's Eddy, or the Maiden's Gate;—very much prettier, I assure you, than such cold-blooded things

as the Devil's Slide, where we are going now, and much more attractive to tourists.'

'Miss Devlin,' laughed I, 'you have all the eagerness of the incipient millionaire. May I hope to see you in Lombard Street some day, a very Katherine among capitalists? — for, from your remarks, I judge that you would—I say it pensively—"wade through slaughter to a throne."'

Galt Roscoe, who was just ahead with Mrs. Revel and Amy Devlin, turned and said: 'Who is that quoting so dramatically? Now, this is a picnic party, and any one who introduces elegies, epics, sonnets, "and such," is guilty of breaking the peace at Viking and its environs. Besides, such things should always be left to the parson. He must not be outflanked, his thunder must not be stolen. The scientist has unlimited resources; all he has to do, is to be vague, and look prodigious; but the parson must have his poetry as a monopoly, or he is lost to sight and memory.'

'Then,' said I, 'I shall leave you to deal with Miss Devlin yourself, because she is the direct cause of my wrong-doing. She has expressed the most sinister sentiments about Viking and your very extensive parish. Miss Devlin,' I added, turning to her, 'I leave you to your fate, and I cannot recommend you to mercy, for what Heaven

made fair, should remain tender and merciful, and——'

'"So young and so untender!"' she interjected, with a rippling laugh. 'Yet Cordelia was misjudged very wickedly, and traduced very ungallantly, and so am I. And I bid you good-day, sir.

Her delicate laugh rings in my ears as I write. I think that sun and clear skies and hills go far to make us cheerful and harmonious. Somehow, I always remember her as she was that morning.

She was standing then on the brink of a new and beautiful experience, at the threshold of an acknowledged love. And that is a remarkable time to the young.

There was something thrilling about the experiences of that morning, and I think we all felt it. Even the great frowning precipices seemed to have lost their ordinary gloom, and when some young white eagles rose from a crag and flew away, growing smaller as they passed, until they were one with the snow of the glacier on Mount Trinity; or a wapiti peeped out from the underwood and stole away with glancing feet down the valley; we could scarcely refrain from doing some foolish thing out of sheer delight. At length we emerged from a thicket of Douglas pine upon the shore of the

Whi-Whi, and, loosening our boat, were soon moving slowly on the cool current. For an hour or more we rowed down the river towards the Long Cloud, and then drew into the shade of a little island for lunch. When we came to the rendezvous, where picnic parties generally feasted, we found a fire still smoking and the remnants of a lunch scattered about. A party of picnickers had evidently been there just before us. Ruth suggested that it might be some of the tourists from the hotel. This seemed very probable.

There were scraps of newspaper on the ground, and among them was an empty envelope. Mechanically I picked it up, and read the superscription. What I saw there I did not think necessary to disclose to the other members of the party; but, as unconcernedly as possible, for Ruth Devlin's eyes were on me, I used it to light a cigar,—inappropiately, for lunch would soon be ready.

'What was the name on the envelope?' she said. 'Was there one?'

I guessed she had seen my slight start. I said evasively: 'I fancy there was, but a man who is immensely interested in a new brand of cigar——'

'You are a most deceitful man,' she said. 'And, at the least, you are selfish in holding your cigar more important than a woman's curiosity. Who

can tell what romance was in the address on that envelope——'

'What elements of noble tragedy, what advertisement for a certain property in the Whi-Whi Valley,' interrupted Roscoe, breaking off the thread of a sailor's song he was humming, as he tended the water-kettle on the fire.

This said, he went on with the song again. I was struck by the wonderful change in him now. Presentiments were far from him, yet I, having read that envelope, knew that they were not without cause. Indeed, I had an inkling of that the night before, when I heard the voices on the hill. Ruth Devlin stopped for a moment in the preparations to ask Roscoe what he was humming. I, answering for him, told her that it was an old sentimental sea-song of common sailors, often sung by officers at their jovial gatherings. At this she pretended to look shocked, and straightway demanded to hear the words, so that she could pronounce judgment on her spiritual pastor and master.

He good-naturedly said that many of these old sailor songs were amusing, and that he often found himself humming them. To this I could testify, and he sang them very well indeed — quietly, but with the rolling tone of the sailor, jovial yet fascinating. At our united request, his

humming became distinct. Three of the verses I give here:—

'The *Lovely Jane* went sailing down
To anchor at the Spicy Isles;
And the wind was fair as ever was blown,
For the matter of a thousand miles.

Then a storm arose as she crossed the line,
Which it caused her masts to crack;
And she gulped her fill of the whooping brine,
And she likewise sprained her back.

And the capting cried, "If it's Davy Jones,
Then it's Davy Jones," says he,
"Though I don't aspire to leave my bones
In the equatorial sea."

What the further history of the *Lovely Jane* was we were not informed, for Ruth Devlin announced that the song must wait, though it appeared to be innocuous and child-like in its sentiments, and that lunch would be served between the acts of the touching tragedy. When lunch was over, and we had again set forth upon the Whi-Whi, I asked Ruth to sing an old French-Canadian song which she had once before sung to us. Many a time the woods of the West had resounded to the notes of *En Roulant ma Boule*, as the *voyageurs* traversed the long paths of the Ottawa, St. Lawrence, and Mississippi; brave, light-hearted fellows, whose singing days were over.

By the light of coming events there was some-

thing weird and pathetic in this Arcadian air, sung as it was by her. Her voice was a mezzo-soprano of rare bracing quality, and she had enough natural sensibility to give the antique refinement of the words a wistful charm, particularly apparent in these verses :—

'Ah, cruel Prince, my heart you break,
In killing thus my snow-white drake.

My snow-white drake, my love, my King,
The crimson life-blood stains his wing.

His golden bill sinks on his breast,
His plumes go floating east and west—

En roulant ma boule :
Rouli, roulant, ma boule roulant,
En roulant ma boule roulant,
En roulant ma boule !'

As she finished the song we rounded an angle in the Whi-Whi. Ahead of us lay the Snow Rapids and the swift channel at one side of the rapids which, hurrying through a rocky archway, was known as the Devil's Slide. There was one channel through the rapids by which it was perfectly safe to pass, but that sweep of water through the Devil's Slide was sometimes a trap of death to even the most expert river-men. A half-mile below the rapids was the confluence of the two rivers. The sight of the tumbling mass of white water, and the gloomy and colossal grandeur of

the Devil's Slide, a buttress of the hills, was very fine.

But there was more than scenery to interest us here, for, moving quickly towards the Slide, was a boat with three people in it. They were evidently intending to attempt that treacherous passage, which culminated in a series of eddies, a menace to even the best oarsmanship. They certainly were not aware of their danger, for there came over the water the sound of a man's laughing voice, and the two women in the boat were in unconcerned attitudes. Roscoe shouted to them, and motioned them back, but they did not appear to understand.

The man waved his hat to us, and rowed on. There was but one thing for us to do: to make the passage quickly through the safe channel of the rapids, and to be of what service we could on the other side of the Slide, if necessary. We bent to the oars, and the boat shot through the water. Ruth held the rudder firmly, and her young sister and Mrs. Revel sat perfectly still. But the man in the other boat, thinking, doubtless, that we were attempting a race, added his efforts to the current of the channel. I am afraid that I said some words below my breath scarcely proper to be spoken in the presence of maidens and a clerk in holy orders. Roscoe was here, however, a

hundred times more sailor than parson. He spoke in low, firm tones, as he now and then suggested a direction to Ruth Devlin or myself. Our boat tossed and plunged in the rapids, and the water washed over us lightly once or twice, but we went through the passage safely, and had turned towards the Slide before the other boat got to the rocky archway.

We rowed hard. The next minute was one of suspense, for we saw the boat shoot beneath the archway. Presently it emerged, a whirling plaything in treacherous eddies. The man wildly waved his arm, and shouted to us. The women were grasping the sides of the boat, but making no outcry. We could not see the faces of the women plainly yet. The boat ran forward like a race-horse; it plunged hither and thither. An oar snapped in the rocks, and the other one shot from the man's hand. Now the boat swung round and round, and dipped towards the hollow of a whirlpool. When we were within a few rods of them, it appeared to rise from the water, was hurled on a rock, and overturned. Mrs. Revel buried her face in her hands, and Ruth gave a little groan, but she held the rudder firmly, as we swiftly approached the forms struggling in the water. All, fortunately, had grasped the swamped

boat, and were being carried down the stream towards us. The man was caring resolutely for himself, but one of the women had her arm round the other, supporting her. We brought our skiff close to the swirling current. I called out words of encouragement, and was preparing to jump into the water, when Roscoe exclaimed in a husky voice: 'Marmion, it is Mrs. Falchion.'

Yes, it was Mrs. Falchion; but I had known that before. We heard her words to her companion: 'Justine, do not look so. Your face is like death. It is hateful.'

Then the craft veered towards the smoother water where we were. This was my opportunity. Roscoe threw me a rope, and I plunged in and swam towards the boat. I saw that Mrs. Falchion recognised me; but she made no exclamation, nor did Justine Caron. Their companion, however, on the other side of the boat, was eloquent in prayers to be rescued. I caught the bow of the boat as it raced past me, and with all my strength swung it towards the smoother water. I ran the rope I had brought through the iron ring at the bow, and was glad enough of that; for their lives perhaps depended on being able to do it. It had been a nice calculation of chances, but it was done. Roscoe immediately bent to the oars, I

threw an arm around Justine, and in a moment Roscoe had towed us into safer quarters. Then he drew in the rope. As he did so, Mrs. Falchion said: 'Justine would drown so easily if one would let her.'

These were her first words to me. I am sure I never can sufficiently admire the mere courage of the woman and her presence of mind in danger. Immediately afterwards she said, — and subsequently it seemed to me marvellous,—'You are something more than the chorus to the play this time, Dr. Marmion.'

A minute after, and Justine was dragged into our boat, and was followed by Mrs. Falchion, whose first words to Roscoe were: 'It is not such a meeting as one would plan.'

And he replied: 'I am glad no harm has come to you.'

The man was duly helped in. A poor creature he was, to pass from this tale as he entered it, ignominiously and finally here. I even hide his nationality, for his race are generally more gallant. But he was wealthy, had an intense admiration for Mrs. Falchion, and had managed to secure her in his boat, to separate from the rest of the picnic party—chiefly through his inefficient rowing.

Dripping with water as Mrs. Falchion was, she

did not, strange to say, appear at serious disadvantage. Almost any other woman would have done so. She was a little pale, she must have felt miserable, but she accepted Ruth Devlin's good offices—as did Justine Caron those of Mrs. Revel—with much self-possession, scanning her face and form critically the while, and occasionally turning a glance on Roscoe, who was now cold and impassive. I never knew a man who could so danish expression from his countenance when necessary. Speaking to Belle Treherne long afterwards of Mrs. Falchion's self-possessed manner on this occasion, and of how she rose superior to the situation, I was told that I must have regarded the thing poetically and dramatically, for no woman could possibly look self-possessed in draggled skirts. She said that I always magnified certain of Mrs. Falchion's qualities.

That may be so, and yet it must be remembered that I was not predisposed towards her, and that I wished her well away from where Roscoe was.

As for Justine Caron, she lay with her head on Mrs. Revel's lap, and looked from beneath heavy eyelids at Roscoe with such gratitude and—but, no, she is only a subordinate in the story, and not a chief factor, and what she said or did here is of no vital consequence at this moment! We rowed to

a point near the confluence of the two rivers, where we could leave our boats to be poled back through the rapids or portaged past them.

On the way Mrs. Falchion said to Roscoe: 'I knew you were somewhere in the Rockies; and at Vancouver, when I came from San Francisco, I heard of your being here. I had intended spending a month somewhere in the mountains, so I came to Viking, and on to the summer hotel: but really this is too exciting for recreation.'

This was spoken with almost gay outward manner, but there was a note in her words which I did not like, nor did I think that her eye was very kind, especially when she looked at Ruth Devlin and afterwards at Roscoe.

We had several miles to go, and it was nightfall —for which Mrs. Falchion expressed herself as profoundly grateful—when we arrived at the hotel. Our parting words were as brief as, of necessity, they had been on our journey through the mountains, for the ladies had ridden the horses which we had sent over for ourselves from Viking, and we men walked in front. Besides, the thoughts of some of us were not at all free from misgiving. The spirit possessing Roscoe the night before seemed to enter into all of us, even into Mrs. Falchion, who had lost, somewhat, the *aplomb*

with which she had held the situation in the boat. But at the door of the hotel she said cheerfully: 'Of course, Dr. Marmion will find it necessary to call on his patients to-morrow,—and the clergyman also on his new parishioners.'

The reply was left to me. I said gravely: 'Let us be thankful that both doctor and clergyman are called upon to use their functions; it might easily have been only the latter.'

'Oh, do not be funereal!' she replied. 'I knew that we were not to drown at the Devil's Slide. The drama is not ended yet, and the chief actors cannot go until "the curtain."—Though I am afraid that is not quite orthodox, is it, Mr. Roscoe?'

Roscoe looked at her gravely. 'It may not be orthodox as it is said, but it is orthodox, I fancy, if we exchange God for fate, and Providence for chance. . . . Good-night.'

He said this wearily. She looked up at him with an ironical look, then held out her hand, and quickly bade him good-night. Partings all round were made, and, after some injunctions to Mrs. Falchion and Justine Caron from myself as to preventives against illness, the rest of us started for Sunburst.

As we went, I could not help but contrast Ruth and Amy Devlin, these two gentle yet strong

mountain girls, with the woman we had left. Their lives were far from that dolorous tide which, sweeping through a selfish world, leaves behind it the stain of corroding passions; of cruelties, ingratitude, hate, and catastrophe. We are all ambitious, in one way or another. We climb mountains over scoria that frays and lava that burns. We try to call down the stars, and when, now and then, our conjuring succeeds, we find that our stars are only blasting meteors. One moral mishap lames character for ever. A false start robs us of our natural strength, and a misplaced or unrighteous love deadens the soul and shipwrecks just conceptions of life.

A man may be forgiven for a sin, but the effect remains; it has found its place in his constitution, and it cannot be displaced by mere penitence, nor yet forgiveness. A man errs, and he must suffer; his father erred, and he must endure; or some one sinned against the man, and he hid the sin—But here a hand touched my shoulder! I was startled, for my thoughts had been far away. Roscoe's voice spoke in my ear,—'It is as she said; the actors come together for "the curtain."'

Then his eyes met those of Ruth Devlin turned to him earnestly and inquiringly. And I felt for a moment hard against Roscoe, that he should

even indirectly and involuntarily, bring suffering into her life. In youth, in early manhood, we do wrong. At the time we seem to be injuring no one but ourselves; but, as we live on, we find that we were wronging whomsoever should come into our lives in the future. At the instant I said angrily to myself: 'What right has he to love a girl like that, when he has anything in his life that might make her unhappy, or endanger her in ever so little!'

But I bit my tongue, for it seemed to me that I was pharisaical; and I wondered rather scornfully if I should have been so indignant were the girl not so beautiful, young, and ingenuous. I tried not to think further of the matter, and talked much to Ruth,—Galt Roscoe walked with Mrs. Revel and Amy Devlin,—but I found I could not drive it from my mind. This was not unnatural, for was not I the 'chorus to the play'?

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SONG OF THE SAW

THERE was still a subdued note to Roscoe's manner the next morning. He was pale. He talked freely however of the affairs of Viking and Sunburst, and spoke of business which called him to Mr. Devlin's great saw-mill that day. A few moments after breakfast we were standing in the doorway. 'Well,' he said, 'shall we go?'

I was not quite sure where he meant to go, but I took my hat and joined him. I wondered if it would be to the summer hotel or the great mill. My duty lay in the direction of the hotel. When we stepped out, he added: 'Let us take the bridle-path along the edge of the ravine to the hotel.'

The morning was beautiful. The atmosphere of the woods was of soft, diffusive green — the sunlight filtering through the transparent leaves.

Bowers of delicate ferns and vines flanked the path, and an occasional clump of giant cedars invited us: the world was eloquent.

Several tourists upon the verandah of the hotel remarked us with curiosity as we entered. A servant said that Mrs. Falchion would be glad to see us; and we were ushered into her sitting-room. She carried no trace of yesterday's misadventure. She appeared superbly well. And yet, when I looked again, when I had time to think upon and observe detail, I saw signs of change. There was excitement in the eyes, and a slight nervous darkness beneath them, which added to their charm. She rose, smiling, and said: 'I fear I am hardly entitled to this visit, for I am beyond convalescence, and Justine is not in need of shrift or diagnosis, as you see.'

I was not so sure of Justine Caron as she was, and when I had paid my respects to her, I said a little priggishly (for I was young), still, not too solemnly,—'I cannot allow you to pronounce for me upon my patients, Mrs. Falchion; I must make my own inquiries.'

But Mrs. Falchion was right. Justine Caron was not suffering much from her immersion; though, speaking professionally, her temperature was higher than the normal. But that might be from some

impulse of the moment, for Justine was naturally a little excitable.

We walked aside, and, looking at me with a flush of happiness in her face, she said: 'You remember one day on the *Fulvia* when I told you that money was everything to me; that I would do all I honourably could to get it?'

I nodded. She continued: 'It was that I might pay a debt—you know it. Well, money is my god no longer, for I can pay all I owe. That is, I can pay the money, but not the goodness, the noble kindness. He *is* most good, is he not? The world is better that such men as Captain Galt Roscoe live—ah, you see I cannot quite think of him as a clergyman. I wonder if I ever shall!' She grew suddenly silent and abstracted, and, in the moment's pause, some ironical words in Mrs. Falchion's voice floated across the room to me: 'It is so strange to see you so. And you preach, and baptize, and marry, and bury, and care for the poor and—ah, what is it?—"all those who, in this transitory life, are in sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity"? . . . And do you never long for the flesh-pots of Egypt? Never long for'—here her voice was not quite so clear—'for the past, Galt Roscoe?'

I was sure that, whatever she was doing, he had

been trying to keep the talk, as it were, on the surface. I was equally sure that, to her last question, he would make no reply. Though I was now speaking to Justine Caron, I heard him say quite calmly and firmly: 'Yes, I preach, baptize, marry, and bury, and do all I can for those who need help.'

'The people about here say that you are good and charitable. You have won the hearts of the mountaineers. But you always had a gift that way.'—I did not like her tone.—'One would almost think you had founded a new dispensation. And if I had drowned yesterday, you would, I suppose, have buried me, and have preached a little sermon about me.—You could have done that better than any one else! . . . What would you have said in such a case?'

There was an earnest, almost a bitter, protest in the reply.

'Pardon me, if I cannot answer your question. Your life was saved, and that is all we have to consider, except to be grateful to Providence. The duties of my office have nothing to do with possibilities.'

She was evidently torturing him, and I longed to say a word that would torture her. She continued: 'And the flesh-pots — you have not

answered about them: do you not long for them—occasionally?'

'They are of a period,' he said, 'too distant for regret.'

'And yet,' she replied softly, 'I fancied sometimes in London last year, that you had not outgrown that antique time—those lotos-days.'

He made no reply at once, and in the pause Justine and I passed out to the verandah.

'How long does Mrs. Falchion intend remaining here, Miss Caron?' I said.

Her reply was hesitating: 'I do not quite know; but I think some time. She likes the place; it seems to amuse her.'

'And you—does it amuse you?'

'It does not matter about me. I am madame's servant; but, indeed, it does not amuse me particularly.'

'Do you like the place?'

The reply was somewhat hurried, and she glanced at me a little nervously. 'Oh yes,' she said, 'I like the place, but——'

Here Roscoe appeared at the door and said: 'Mrs. Falchion wishes to see Viking and Mr. Devlin's mills, Marmion; she will go with us.

In a little time we were on our way to Viking. I walked with Mrs. Falchion, and Roscoe with

Justine. I was aware of a new element in Mrs. Falchion's manner. She seemed less powerfully attractive to me than in the old days, yet she certainly was more beautiful. It was hard to trace the new characteristic. But at last I thought I saw it in a decrease of that cold composure, that impassiveness, so fascinating in the past. In its place had come an allusive, restless something, to be found in words of troublesome vagueness, in variable moods, in an increased sensitiveness of mind and an under-current of emotional bitterness — she was emotional at last! She puzzled me greatly, for I saw two spirits in her: one pitiless as of old; the other human, anxious, not unlovely.

At length we became silent, and walked so side by side for a time. Then, with that old delightful egotism and selfishness — delightful in its very daring—she said: 'Well, amuse me!'

'And is it still the end of your existence,' I rejoined, 'to be amused?'

'What is there else to do?' she replied with raillery.

'Much. To amuse others, for instance; to regard human beings as something more than automata.'

'Has Mr. Roscoe made you a preaching curate? —I helped Amshar at the Tanks.'

'One does not forget that. Yet you pushed Amshar with your foot.'

'Did you expect me to kiss the black coward? —Then, I nursed Mr. Roscoe in his illness.'

'And before that?'

'And before that I was born into the world, and grew to years of knowledge, and learned what fools we mortals be, and—and there! is that Mr. Devlin's big saw-mill?'

We had suddenly emerged on a shelf of the mountain-side, and were looking down into the Long Cloud Valley. It was a noble sight. Far to the north were foot-hills covered with the glorious Norfolk pine, rising in steppes till they seemed to touch white plateaus of snow, which again billowed to glacier fields whose austere bosoms man's hand had never touched; and these suddenly lifted up huge, unapproachable shoulders, crowned with majestic peaks that took in their teeth the sun, the storm, and the whirlwinds of the north, never changing countenance from day to year and from year to age.

Facing this long line of glory, running irregularly on towards that sea where Franklin and M'Clintock led their gay adventurers,—the bold ships,—was another shore, not so high or superior, but tall and sombre and warm, through whose

endless coverts of pine there crept and idled the generous Chinook winds—the soothing breath of the friendly Pacific. Between these shores the Long Cloud River ran; now boisterous, now soft, now wallowing away through long channels, washing gorges always dark as though shaded by winter, and valleys always green as favoured by summer. Creeping along a lofty narrow path upon that farther shore was a mule train, bearing packs which would not be opened till, through the great passes of the mountain, they were spilled upon the floors of fort and post on the east side of the Rockies.

Not far from where the mule train crept along was a great hole in the mountain-side, as though antique giants of the hills had tunnelled through to make themselves a home or to find the eternal secret of the mountains. Near to this vast dark cavity was a hut — a mere playhouse, it seemed, so small was it, viewed from where we stood. From the edge of a cliff just in front of this hut, there swung a long cable, which reached almost to the base of the shore beneath us; and, even as we looked, we saw what seemed a tiny bucket go swinging slowly down that strange hypotenuse. We watched it till we saw it get to the end of its journey in the valley beneath, not far from the great mill to which we were bound.

'How mysterious!' said Mrs. Falchion. 'What does it mean? I never saw anything like that before. What a wonderful thing!'

Roscoe explained. 'Up there in that hut,' he said, 'there lives a man called Phil Boldrick. He is a unique fellow, with a strange history. He has been miner, sailor, woodsman, river-driver, trapper, salmon-fisher;—expert at the duties of each of these, persistent at none. He has a taste for the ingenious and the unusual. For a time he worked in Mr. Devlin's mill. It was too tame for him. He conceived the idea of supplying the valley with certain necessaries, by intercepting the mule trains as they passed across the hills, and getting them down to Viking by means of that cable. The valley laughed at him; men said it was impossible. He went to Mr. Devlin, and Mr. Devlin came to me. I have, as you know, some knowledge of machinery and engineering. I thought the thing feasible but expensive, and told Mr. Devlin so. However, the ingenuity of the thing pleased Mr. Devlin, and, with that singular enterprise which in other directions has made him a rich man, he determined on its completion. Between us we managed it. Boldrick carries on his aerial railway with considerable success, as you see.'

'A singular man,' said Mrs. Falchion. 'I should

like to see him. Come, sit down here and tell me all you know about him, will you not?'

Roscoe assented. I arranged a seat for us, and we all sat.

Roscoe was about to begin, when Mrs. Falchion said: 'Wait a minute. Let us take in this scene first.' We were silent. After a moment I turned to Mrs. Falchion, and said: 'It is beautiful, is it not?'

She drew in a long breath, her eyes lighted up, and she said with a strange abandon of gaiety: 'Yes; it is delightful to live.'

It seemed so, in spite of the forebodings of my friend and my own uneasiness concerning him, Ruth Devlin, and Mrs. Falchion. The place was all peace: a very monotony of toil and pleasure. The heat drained through the valley back and forth in visible palpitations upon the roofs of the houses, the mills, and the vast piles of lumber: all these seemed breathing. It looked a busy Arcady. From beneath us life vibrated with the regularity of a pulse: distance gave a kind of delighted ease to toil. Event appeared asleep.

But when I look back now, after some years, at the experiences of that day, I am astonished by the running fire of events, which, unfortunately were not all joy.

As I write I can hear that keen wild singing of the saw come to us distantly, with a pleasant, weird elation. The big mill hung above the river, its sides all open, humming with labour, as I had seen it many a time during my visit to Roscoe. The sun beat in upon it, making a broad piazza of light about its sides. Beyond it were pleasant shadows, through which men passed and repassed at their work. Life was busy all about it. Yet the picture was bold, open, and strong. Great iron hands reached down into the water, clamped a massive log or huge timber, lightly drew it up the slide from the water, where, guided by the hand-spikes of the men, it was laid upon its cradle and carried slowly to the devouring teeth of the saws: there to be sliced through rib and bone in moist sandwiched layers, oozing the sweet sap of its fibre; and carried out again into the open to be drained to dry bones under the exhaust-pipes of the sun: piles upon piles; houses with wide chinks through which the winds wandered, looking for tenants and finding none.

To the north were booms of logs, swilling in the current, waiting for their devourer. Here and there were groups of river-drivers and their foremen, prying twisted heaps of logs from the rocks or the shore into the water. Other groups of river-

drivers were scattered upon the banks, lifting their huge red canoes high up on the platforms, the spring's and summer's work of river-driving done; while others lounged upon the grass, or wandered lazily through the village, sporting with the Chinamen, or chaffing the Indian idling in the sun—a garish figure stoically watching the inroads of civilisation. The town itself was squat but amiable: small houses and large huts; the only place of note and dignity, the new town hall, which was greatly overshadowed by the big mill, and even by the two smaller ones flanking it north and south.

But Viking was full of men who had breathed the strong life of the hills, had stolen from Nature some of her brawny strength, and set themselves up before her as though a man were as great as a mountain and as good a thing to see. It was of such a man that Galt Roscoe was to tell us. His own words I will not give, but will speak of Phil Boldrick as I remember him and as Roscoe described him to us.

Of all the men in the valley, none was so striking as Phil Boldrick. Of all faces his was the most singular; of all characters his the most unique; of all men he was the most unlucky, save in one thing, —the regard of his fellows. Others might lay up treasures, not he; others lose money at gambling,

not he—he never had much to lose. But yet he did all things magniloquently. The wave of his hand was expansive, his stride was swaying and decisive, his over-ruling, fraternal faculty was always in full swing. Viking was his adopted child; so much so that a gentleman river-driver called it Philippi; and by that name it sometimes went, and continues still so among those who knew it in the old days.

Others might have doubts as to the proper course to pursue under certain circumstances; it was not so with Phil. They might argue a thing out orally, he did so mentally, and gave judgment on it orally. He was final, not oracular. One of his eyes was of glass, and blue; the other had an eccentricity, and was of a deep and meditative grey. It was a wise and knowing eye. It was trained to many things — like one servant in a large family. One side of his face was solemn, because of the gay but unchanging blue eye, the other was gravely humorous, shrewdly playful. His fellow citizens respected him; so much so, that they intended to give him an office in the new-formed corporation; which means that he had courage and downrightness, and that the rough, straightforward gospel of the West was properly interpreted by him.

If a stranger came to the place, Phil was sent first to reconnoitre; if any function was desirable, Phil was requested to arrange it; if justice was to be meted out, Phil's opinion had considerable weight—for he had much greater leisure than other more prosperous men; if a man was taken ill (this was in the days before a doctor came), Phil was asked to declare if he would 'shy from the finish.'

I heard Roscoe more than once declare that Phil was as good as two curates to him. Not that Phil was at all pious, nor yet possessed of those abstemious qualities in language and appetite by which good men are known; but he had a gift of civic virtue—important in a wicked world, and of unusual importance in Viking. He had neither self-consciousness nor fear; and while not possessed of absolute tact in a social way, he had a knack of doing the right thing bluntly, or the wrong thing with an air of rightness. He envied no man, he coveted nothing; had once or twice made other men's fortunes by prospecting, but was poor himself. And in all he was content, and loved life and Viking.

Immediately after Roscoe had reached the mountains Phil had become his champion, declaring that there was not any reason why a man

should not be treated sociably because he was a parson. Phil had been a great traveller, as had many who settled at last in these valleys to the exciting life of the river: salmon-catching or driving logs. He had lived for a time in Lower California and Mexico, and had given Roscoe the name of The Padre: which suited the genius and temper of the rude population. And so it was that Roscoe was called The Padre by every one, though he did not look the character.

As he told his story of Phil's life I could not help but contrast him with most of the clergymen I knew or had seen. He had the admirable ease and tact of a cultured man of the world and the frankness and warmth of a hearty nature, which had, however, some inherent strain of melancholy. Wherever I had gone with him I had noticed that he was received with good-humoured deference by his rough parishioners and others who were such only in the broadest sense. Perhaps he would not have succeeded so well if he had worn clerical clothes. As it was, of a week day, he could not be distinguished from any respectable layman. The clerical uniform attracts women more than men, who, if they spoke truly, would resent it. Roscoe did not wear it, because he thought more of men than of function, of manliness than clothes;

and though this sometimes got him into trouble with his clerical brethren who dearly love Roman collar, and coloured stole, and the range of ritual from a lofty intoning to the eastward position, he managed to live and himself be none the worse, while those who knew him were certainly the better.

When Roscoe had finished his tale, Mrs. Falchion said: 'Mr. Boldrick must be a very interesting man;' and her eyes wandered up to the great hole in the mountain-side, and lingered there. 'As I said, I must meet him,' she added; 'men of individuality are rare.'—Then: 'That great "hole in the wall" is of course a natural formation.'

'Yes,' said Roscoe. 'Nature seems to have made it for Boldrick. He uses it as a storehouse.'

'Who watches it while he is away?' she said. 'There is no door to the place, of course.'

Roscoe smiled enigmatically. 'Men do not steal up here: that is the unpardonable crime; any other may occur and go unpunished; not it.'

The thought seemed to strike Mrs. Falchion. 'I might have known!' she said. 'It is the same in the South Seas among the natives: Samoans, Tongans, Fijians, and others. You can—as you know, Mr. Roscoe,'—her voice had a subterranean meaning,—'travel from end to end of those places,

and, until the white man corrupts them, never meet with a case of stealing: you will find them moral too in other ways until the white man corrupts them. But sometimes the white man pays for it in the end.'

Her last words were said with a kind of dreaminess, as though they had no purpose; but though she sat now idly looking into the valley beneath, I could see that her eyes had a peculiar glance, which was presently turned on Roscoe, then withdrawn again. On him the effect was so far disturbing that he became a little pale, but I noticed that he met her glance unflinchingly and then looked at me, as if to see in how far I had been affected by her speech. I think I confessed to nothing in my face.

Justine Caron was lost in the scene before us. She had, I fancy, scarcely heard half that had been said. Roscoe said to her presently: 'You like it, do you not?'

'Like it?' she said. 'I never saw anything so wonderful.'

'And yet it would not be so wonderful without humanity there,' rejoined Mrs. Falchion. 'Nature is never complete without man. All that would be splendid without the mills and the machinery and Boldrick's cable, but it would not be perfect: it

needs man—Phil Boldrick and Company in the foreground. Nature is not happy by itself: it is only brooding and sorrowful. You remember the mountain of Talili in Samoa, Mr. Roscoe, and the valley about it: how entrancing yet how melancholy it is. It always seems to be haunted, for the natives never live in the valley. There is a tradition that once one of the white gods came down from heaven, and built an altar, and sacrificed a Samoan girl—though no one ever knew quite why: for there the tradition ends.

I felt again that there was a hidden meaning in her words; but Roscoe remained perfectly still. It seemed to me that I was little by little getting the threads of his story. That there was a native girl; that the girl had died or been killed; that Roscoe was in some way—innocently I dared hope—connected with it; and that Mrs. Falchion held the key to the mystery, I was certain. That it was in her mind to use the mystery, I was also certain. But for what end I could not tell. What had passed between them in London the previous winter I did not know: but it seemed evident that she had influenced him there as she did on the *Fulvia*, had again lost her influence, and was now resenting the loss, out of pique or anger, or because she really cared for him. It might be that she cared.

She added after a moment: 'Add man to nature, and it stops sulking: which goes to show that fallen humanity is better than no company at all.'

She had an inherent strain of mockery, of playful satire, and she told me once, when I knew her better, that her own suffering always set her laughing at herself, even when it was greatest. It was this characteristic which made her conversation very striking, it was so sharply contrasted in its parts; a heartless kind of satire set against the most serious and acute statements. One never knew when she would turn her own or her interlocutor's gravity into mirth.

Now no one replied immediately to her remarks, and she continued: 'If I were an artist I should wish to paint that scene, given that the lights were not so bright and that mill machinery not so sharply defined. There is almost too much limelight, as it were; too much earnestness in the thing. Either there should be some side-action of mirth to make it less intense, or of tragedy to render it less photographic; and unless, Dr. Marmion, you would consent to be solemn, which would indeed be droll; or that The Padre there—how amusing they should call him that!—should cease to be serious, which, being so very unusual, would be tragic, I do not know how we are to tell the artist

that he has missed a chance of immortalising himself.'

Roscoe said nothing, but smiled at her vivacity, while he deprecated her words by a wave of his hand. I also was silent for a moment; for there had come to my mind, while she was speaking and I was watching the scene, something that Hungerford had said to me once on board the *Fulvia*. 'Marmion,' said he, 'when everything at sea appears so absolutely beautiful and honest that it thrills you, and you're itching to write poetry, look out. There's trouble ahead. It's only the pretty pause in the happy scene of the play before the villain comes in and tumbles things about. When I've been on the bridge,' he continued, 'of a night that set my heart thumping, I knew, by Jingo! it was the devil playing his silent overture.—Don't you take in the twaddle about God sending thunderbolts; it's that old war-horse down below.—And then I've kept a sharp look-out, for I knew as right as rain that a company of waterspouts would be walking down on us, or a hurricane racing to catch us broadsides. And what's gospel for sea is good for land, and you'll find it so, my son.'

I was possessed of the same feeling now as I looked at the scene before us, and I suppose I

seemed moody, for immediately Mrs. Falchion said: 'Why, now my words have come true; the scene can be made perfect. Pray step down to the valley, Dr. Marmion, and complete the situation, for you are trying to seem serious, and it is irresistibly amusing—and professional, I suppose; one must not forget that you teach the young "saw-bones" how to saw.'

I was piqued, annoyed. I said, though I admit it was not cleverly said: 'Mrs. Falchion, I am willing to go and complete that situation, if you will go with me; for you would provide the tragedy—plenty of it; there would be the full perihelion of elements; your smile is the incarnation of the serious.

She looked at me full in the eyes. 'Now that,' she said, 'is a very good *quid pro quo*—is that right?—and I have no doubt that it is more or less true; and for a doctor to speak truth and a professor to be understood is a matter for angels. And I actually believe that, in time, you will be free from priggishness, and become a very smart conversationalist; and—suppose we wander on to our proper places in the scene. . . . Besides, I want to see that strange man, Mr. Boldrick.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PATH OF THE EAGLE.

WE travelled slowly down the hillside into the village, and were about to turn towards the big mill when we saw Mr. Devlin and Ruth riding towards us. We halted and waited for them. Mr. Devlin was introduced to Mrs. Falchion by his daughter, who was sweetly solicitous concerning Mrs. Falchion and Justine Caron, and seemed surprised at finding them abroad after the accident of the day before. Ruth said that her father and herself had just come from the summer hotel, where they had gone to call upon Mrs. Falchion. Mrs. Falchion heartily acknowledged the courtesy. She seemed to be playing no part, but was apparently grateful all round; yet I believe that even already Ruth had caught at something in her presence threatening Roscoe's peace; whilst she from the beginning, had, with her more trained instincts, seen the relations between the clergy

man and his young parishioner.—But what had that to do with her?

Between Roscoe and Ruth there was the slightest constraint, and I thought that it gave a troubled look to the face of the girl. Involuntarily, the eyes of both were attracted to Mrs. Falchion. I believe in that moment there was a kind of revelation among the three. While I talked to Mr. Devlin I watched them, standing a little apart, Justine Caron with us. It must have been a painful situation for them: to the young girl because a shadow was trailing across the light of her first love; to Roscoe because the shadow came out of his past; to Mrs. Falchion because she was the shadow.

I felt that trouble was at hand. In this trouble I knew that I was to play a part; for, if Roscoe had his secret and Mrs. Falchion had the key to it, I also held a secret which, in case of desperate need, I should use. I did not wish to use it, for though it was mine it was also another's. I did not like the look in Mrs. Falchion's eyes as she glanced at Ruth: I was certain that she resented Roscoe's regard for Ruth and Ruth's regard for Roscoe; but, up to that moment, I had not thought it possible that she cared for him deeply. Once she had influenced me, but she had never cared for me.

I could see a change in her. Out of it came that glance at Ruth, which seemed to me the talon-like hatred that shot from the eyes of Goneril and Regan: and I was sure that if she loved Roscoe, there would be mad trouble for him and for the girl. Heretofore she had been passionless, but there was a dormant power in her which had only to be wickedly aroused to wreck her own and others' happiness. Hers was one of those volcanic natures, defying calculation and ordinary conceptions of life; having the fullest capacity for all the elementary passions, — hatred, love, cruelty, delight, loyalty, revolt, jealousy. She had never from her birth until now felt love for any one. She had never been awakened. Even her affection for her father had been dutiful rather than instinctive. She had provoked love, but had never given it. She had been self-centred, compulsive, unrelenting. She had unmoved seen and let her husband go to his doom — it was his doom and death so far as she knew.

Yet, as I thought of this, I found myself again admiring her. She was handsome, independent, distinctly original, and possessing capacity for great things. Besides, so far, she had not been actively vindictive—simply passively indifferent to the sufferings of others. She seemed to regard

results more than means. All she did not like she could empty into the mill of the destroying gods: just as General Grant poured hundreds of thousands of men into the valley of the James, not thinking of lives but victory, not of blood but triumph. She too, even in her cruelty, seemed to have a sense of wild justice which disregarded any incidental suffering.

I could see that Mr. Devlin was attracted by her, as every man had been who had ever met her; for, after all, man is but a common slave to beauty: virtue he respects, but beauty is man's valley of suicide. Presently she turned to Mr. Devlin, having, as it seemed to me, made Roscoe and Ruth sufficiently uncomfortable. With that cheerful *insouciance* which was always possible to her on the most trying occasions, she immediately said, as she had often said to me, that she had come to Mr. Devlin to be amused for the morning, perhaps the whole day. It was her way, her selfish way, to make men her slaves.

Mr. Devlin gallantly said that he was at her disposal, and with a kind of pride added that there was plenty in the valley which would interest her; for he was a frank, bluff man, who would as quickly have spoken disparagingly of what belonged to himself, if it was not worthy, as have praised it.

'Where shall we go first?' he said. 'To the mill?'

'To the mill, by all means,' Mrs. Falchion replied; 'I have never been in a great saw-mill, and I believe this is very fine. Then,' she added, with a little wave of the hand towards the cable running down from Phil Boldrick's eyrie in the mountains, 'then I want to see all that cable can do—all, remember.'

Mr. Devlin laughed. 'Well, it hasn't many tricks, but what it does it does cleverly, thanks to The Padre.'

'Oh yes,' responded Mrs. Falchion, still looking at the cable; 'The Padre, I know, is very clever.'

'He is more than clever,' bluffly replied Mr. Devlin, who was not keen enough to see the faint irony in her tones.

'Yes,' responded Mrs. Falchion in the same tone of voice, 'he is more than clever. I have been told that he was once very brave. I have been told that once in the South Seas he did his country a great service.'

She paused. I could see Ruth's eyes glisten and her face suffuse, for though she read the faint irony in the tone, still she saw that the tale which Mrs. Falchion was evidently about to tell, must be to Galt Roscoe's credit. Mrs. Falchion idly turned

upon Ruth and saw the look in her face. An almost imperceptible smile came upon her lips. She looked again at the cable and Phil Boldrick's eyrie, which seemed to have a wonderful attraction for her. Not turning away from it, save now and then to glance indolently at Mr. Devlin or Ruth, and once enigmatically at myself, she said:

'Once upon a time—that is the way, I believe, to begin a pretty story—there were four men-of-war idling about a certain harbour of Samoa. One of the vessels was the flag-ship, with its admiral on board. On one of the other vessels was an officer, who had years before explored this harbour. It was the hurricane season. He advised the admiral not to enter the harbour, for the indications foretold a gale, and himself was not sure that his chart was in all respects correct, for the harbour had been hurriedly explored and sounded. But the admiral gave orders, and they sailed in.

'That day a tremendous hurricane came crying down upon Samoa. It swept across the island, levelled forests of cocoa palms, battered villages to pieces, caught that little fleet in the harbour, and played with it in a horrible madness. To right and left were reefs, behind was the shore, with a monstrous surf rolling in; before was a narrow passage. One vessel made its way out—on it was

the officer who had surveyed the harbour. In the open sea there was safety. He brought his vessel down the coast a little distance, put a rope about him and in the wild surf made for the shore. I believe he could have been court-martialed for leaving his ship, but he was a man who had taken a great many risks of one kind and another in his time. It was one chance out of a hundred; but he made it—he got to the shore, travelled down to the harbour where the men-of-war were careening towards the reefs, unable to make the passage out, and once again he tied a rope about him and plunged into the surf to try for the admiral's ship. He got there terribly battered. They tell how a big wave lifted him and landed him upon the quarter-deck just as big waves are not expected to do. Well, like the hero in any melodrama of the kind, he very prettily piloted monsieur the admiral and his fleet out to the open sea.'

She paused, smiling in an inscrutable sort of way, then turned and said with a sudden softness in her voice, though still with the air of one who wished not to be taken with too great a seriousness: 'And, ladies and gentlemen, the name of the ship that led the way was the *Porcupine;* and the name of the hero was Commander Galt Roscoe, R.N.; and "of such is the kingdom of heaven!"'

There was silence for a moment. The tale had been told adroitly, and with such tact as to words that Roscoe could not take offence — need not, indeed, as he did not, I believe, feel any particular self-consciousness. I am not sure but he was a little glad that such evidence should have been given at the moment, when a kind of restraint had come between him and Ruth, by one who he had reason to think was not wholly his friend,—might be his enemy. It was a kind of offset to his premonitions and to the peril over which he might stumble at any moment.

To me the situation was almost inexplicable; but the woman herself was inexplicable: at this moment the evil genius of us all, at that doing us all a kind of crude, superior justice. I was the first to speak.

'Roscoe,' I said, 'I never had heard of this, although I remember the circumstance as told in the newspapers. But I am glad and proud that I have a friend with such a record.'

'And, only think,' said Mrs. Falchion, 'he actually was not court-martialed for abandoning his ship to save an admiral and a fleet. But the ways of the English Admiralty are wonderful. They go out of their way to avoid a court-martial sometimes, and they go out of their way to establish it sometimes.'

By this time we had started towards the mill. Roscoe walked ahead with Ruth Devlin. Mr. Devlin, Mrs. Falchion, Justine Caron and myself walked together.

Mrs. Falchion presently continued, talking, as it seemed to me, at the back of Roscoe's head:

'I have known the Admiralty to force an officer to resign the navy because he had married a native wife. But I never knew the Admiralty to court-martial an officer because he did not marry a native wife whom he *ought* to have married: but, as I said, the ways of the Admiralty are past admiration.'

I could see Roscoe's hand clench at his side, and presently he said over his shoulder at her: 'Your memory and your philosophy are as wonderful as the Admiralty are inscrutable.'

She laughed. 'You have not lost your old gift of retort,' she said. 'You are still amusing.'

'Well, come,' said Mr. Devlin cheerfully, 'let's see if there isn't something even more amusing than Mr. Roscoe in Viking. I will show you, Mrs. Falchion, the biggest saw that ever ate the heart out of a Norfolk pine.'

At the mill Mrs. Falchion was interested. She asked questions concerning the machinery which mightily pleased Mr. Devlin, they were so apt and

intelligent; and herself assisted in giving an immense log to the teeth of the largest saw, which, with its six upright blades, ate and was never satisfied. She stooped and ran her ungloved hand into the sawdust, as sweet before the sun has dried it as the scent of a rose. The rich smell of the fresh-cut lumber filled the air, and suggested all kinds of remote and pleasant things. The industry itself is one of the first that comes with the invasion of new territory, and makes one think of man's first work in the world: to fell the tree and till the soil. It is impossible to describe that fierce, jubilant song of the saw, which even when we were near was never shrill or shrieking: never drowning our voices, but vibrant and delightful. To Mrs. Falchion it was new; she was impressed.

'I have seen,' she said to Mr. Devlin, 'all sorts of enterprises, but never anything like this. It all has a kind of rough music. It is enjoyable.'

Mr. Devlin beamed. 'I have just added something to the mill that will please you,' he said.

She looked interested. We all gathered round. I stood between Mrs. Falchion and Ruth Devlin, and Roscoe beside Justine Caron.

'It is the greatest mill-whistle in the country,' he continued. 'It will be heard from twelve to twenty-five miles, according to the condition of the

atmosphere. I want big things all round, and this is a masterpiece, I guess. Now, I'll let you hear it if you like. I didn't expect to use it until to-night at nine o'clock, when, also for the first time, I am to light the mills by electricity; a thing that's not been attempted yet in any saw-mill on the continent. We're going to work night and day for a couple of months.'

'This is all very wonderful. And are you indebted to Mr. Roscoe in these things too?—Everybody seems to need him here.'

'Well,' said the mill-owner, laughing, 'the whistle is my own. It's the sort of thing I would propose—to blow my trumpet, as it were; but the electricity and the first experiments in it I owe to The Padre.'

'As I thought,' she said, and turned to Roscoe. 'I remember,' she added, 'that you had an electrical search-light on the *Porcupine*, and that you were fond of electricity. Do you ever use search-lights here? I should think they might be of use in your parish. Then, for a change, you could let the parish turn it upon you, for the sake of contrast and edification.'

For the moment I was exceedingly angry. Her sarcasm was well veiled, but I could feel the sardonic touch beneath the smiling surface. This

innuendo seemed so gratuitous. I said to her, almost beneath my breath, that none of the others could hear: 'How womanly!'

She did no more than lift her eyebrows in acknowledgment, and went on talking lightly to Mr. Devlin. Roscoe was cool, but I could see now in his eyes a kind of smouldering anger; which was quite to my wish. I hoped he would be meek no longer.

Presently Ruth Devlin said: 'Would it not be better to wait till to-night, when the place is lighted, before the whistle is blown? Then you can get a better first impression. And if Mrs. Falchion will come over to our home at Sunburst, we will try and amuse her for the rest of the day —that is, after she has seen all here.'

Mrs. Falchion seemed struck by the frankness of the girl, and for an instant debated, but presently said: 'No, thank you. When all is seen now, I will go to the hotel, and then will join you all here in the evening, if that seems feasible. Perhaps Dr. Marmion will escort me here. Mr. Roscoe, of course, has other duties.'

'I shall be happy,' I said, maliciously smiling, 'to guide you to the sacrifice of the saw.'

She was not disturbed. She touched Mr. Devlin's arm, and, looking archly at him, nodded

backwards towards me. '"Beware the anaconda!"' she said.

It was impossible not to be amused; her repartee was always so unrestrained. She disarmed one by what would have been, in a man, insolent *sang-froid*: in her it was piquancy, daring.

Presently she added: 'But if we are to have no colossal whistle and no electric light till evening, there is one thing I must have: and that is your remarkable Phil Boldrick, who seems to hold you all in the palm of his hand, and lives up there like a god on his Olympus.'

'Well, suppose you go and call on him,' said Roscoe, with a touch of dry humour, his eye on the cable that reached to Boldrick's perch.

She saw her opportunity, and answered promptly: 'Yes, I will call on him immediately,' — here she turned towards Ruth,—'if Miss Devlin and yourself will go with me.'

'Nonsense,' interposed Mr. Devlin. 'Besides, the cage will only hold two easily. Anyhow, it's absurd.'

'Why is it absurd? Is there any danger?' queried Mrs. Falchion.

'Not unless there's an idiot at the machinery.'

'I should expect you to manage it,' she persisted.

'But no woman has ever done it.'

'I will make the record.' And, turning to Ruth, —'You are not afraid?'

'No, I am not afraid,' said the girl bravely, though she acknowledged to me afterwards that while she was not afraid of anything where her own skill was called in question, such as mountain-climbing, or even puma-hunting, she did not joyfully anticipate swinging between heaven and earth on that incline. 'I will go,' she added, 'if my father will let me. . . . May I?' she continued, turning to him.

Perhaps something of the father's pride came up in him, perhaps he had just got some suspicion that between his daughter and Mrs. Falchion there was a subterranean rivalry. However it was, he gave a quick, quizzical look at both of them, then glanced at Roscoe, and said: 'I'll make no objections, if Ruth would like to introduce you to Phil. And, as Mrs. Falchion suggested, I'll "turn the crank."'

I could see that Roscoe had a bad moment. But presently he appeared to me perfectly willing that Ruth should go. Maybe he was as keen that she should not appear at a disadvantage beside Mrs. Falchion as was her father.

A signal was given, and the cage came slowly

down the cable to the mill. We could see Boldrick, looking little bigger than a child at the other end, watching our movements. At the last moment Mr. Devlin and Roscoe seemed apprehensive, but the women were cool and determined. I noticed Mrs. Falchion look at Ruth curiously once or twice after they entered the cage, and before they started, and what she saw evidently gave her a higher opinion of the girl, for she laid her hand on Ruth's arm suddenly, and said: 'We will show these mere men what nerve is.'

Ruth nodded, then *bon voyage* was said, and the signal was given. The cage ascended at first quickly, then more slowly, swaying up and down a little on the cable, and climbing higher and higher through the air to the mountain-side. What Boldrick thought when he saw the two ascending towards him, he expressed to Mr. Devlin later in the day in vigorous language: what occurred at his hut Ruth Devlin told me afterwards. When the cage reached him, he helped the two passengers out, and took them to his hut. With Ruth he had always been a favourite, and he welcomed her with admiring and affectionate respect.

'Never b'lieved you could have done it, Miss Devlin—never! Not but what I knew you weren't afraid of anything on the earth below, or the

waters under the earth; but when you get swinging there over the world, and not high enough to get a hold on heaven, it makes you feel as if things was droppin' away from you like. But, by gracious! you did it like an eagle—you and your friend.'

By this time he was introduced, and at the name of Mrs. Falchion, he cocked his head, and looked quizzically, as if trying to remember something, then drew his hand once or twice across his forehead. After a moment he said: 'Strange, now, ma'am, how your name strikes me. It isn't a common name, and I've heerd it before somewhere—somewhere. It isn't your face that I've seen before—for I'd have remembered it if it was a thousand years ago,' he added admiringly. 'But I've heard some one use it; and I can't tell where.'

She looked curiously at him, and said: 'Don't try to remember, and it will come to you in good time. But show us everything about your place before we go back, won't you, please?'

He showed them his hut, where he lived quite alone. It was supplied with bare necessaries, and with a counter, behind which were cups and a few bottles. In reference to this, Boldrick said: 'Temperance drinks for the muleteers, tobacco and tea and sugar and postage stamps and things

They don't gargle their throats with anything stronger than coffee at this tavern.'

Then he took them to the cave in which puma, bear, and wapiti skins were piled, together with a few stores and the kits of travellers who had left their belongings in Boldrick's keeping till they should come again. After Mrs. Falchion and Ruth had seen all, they came out upon the mountain-side and waved their handkerchiefs to us, who were still watching from below. Then Boldrick hoisted a flag on his hut, which he used on gala occasions, to celebrate the event, and, not content with this, fired a *feu de joie*, managed in this way:—He took two anvils used by the muleteers and expressmen to shoe their animals, and placed one on the other, putting powder between. Then Mrs. Falchion thrust a red-hot iron into the powder, and an explosion ensued. I was for a moment uneasy, but Mr. Devlin reassured me, and instantly a shrill whistle from the little mills answered the salute.

Just before they got into the cage, Mrs. Falchion turned to Boldrick, and said: 'You have not been trying to remember where you heard my name before? Well, can you not recall it now?'

Boldrick shook his head. 'Perhaps you will recall it before I see you again,' she said.

They started. As they did so, Mrs. Falchion said suddenly, looking at Boldrick keenly: 'Were you ever in the South Seas?'

Boldrick stood for an instant open-mouthed, and then exclaimed loudly as the cage swung down the incline: 'By Jingo! No, ma'am, I was never there, but I had a pal who come from Samoa.'

She called back at him,—'Tell me of him when we meet again. What was his name?'

They were too far down the cable now for Boldrick's reply to reach them distinctly. The descent seemed even more adventurous than the ascent, and, in spite of myself, I could not help a thrill of keen excitement. But they were both smiling when the cage reached us, and both had a very fine colour.

'A delightful journey, a remarkable reception, and a very singular man is your Mr. Boldrick,' said Mrs. Falchion.

'Yes,' replied Mr. Devlin, 'you'll know Boldrick a long time before you find his limits. He is about the most curious character I ever knew, and does the most curious things. But straight—straight as a die, Mrs. Falchion!'

'I fancy that Mr. Boldrick and I would be very good friends indeed,' said Mrs. Falchion; 'and I purpose visiting him again. It is quite probable

that we shall find we have had mutual acquaintances.' She looked at Roscoe meaningly as she said this, but he was occupied with Ruth.

'You were not afraid?' Roscoe said to Ruth. 'Was it not a strange sensation?

'Frankly, at first I was a little afraid, because the cage swings on the cable, and it makes you uncomfortable. But I enjoyed it before we got to the end.'

Mrs. Falchion turned to Mr. Devlin. 'I find plenty here to amuse me,' she said, 'and I am glad I came. To-night I want to go up that cable and call on Mr. Boldrick again, and see the mills and the electric light, and hear your whistle, from up there. Then, of course, you must show us the mill working at night, and afterwards—may I ask it?—you must all come and have supper with me at the summer hotel.'

Ruth dropped her eyes. I saw she did not wish to go. Fortunately Mr. Devlin extricated her. 'I'm afraid that will be impossible, Mrs. Falchion,' he said: 'much obliged to you all the same. But I am going to be at the mill pretty near all night, and shouldn't be able to go, and I don't want Ruth to go without me.'

'Then it must be another time,' said Mrs. Falchion.

'Oh, whenever it's convenient for Ruth, after a day or two, I'll be ready and glad. But I tell you what: if you want to see something fine, you must go down as soon as possible to Sunburst. We live there, you know, not here at Viking. It's funny, too, because, you see, there's a feud between Viking and Sunburst—we are all river-men and mill-hands at Viking, and they're all salmon-fishers and fruit-growers at Sunburst. By rights I ought to live here, but when I started I thought I'd build my mills at Sunburst, so I pitched my tent down there. My wife and the girls got attached to the place, and though the mills were built at Viking, and I made all my money up here, I live at Sunburst and spend my shekels there. I guess if I didn't happen to live at Sunburst, people would be trailing their coats and making Donnybrook fairs every other day between these two towns. But that's neither here nor there. Take my advice, Mrs. Falchion, and come to Sunburst and see the salmon-fishers at work, both day and night. It is about the biggest thing in the way of natural picturesqueness that you'll see—outside my mills. Indians, half-breeds, white men, Chinamen,—they are all at it in weirs and cages, or in the nets, and spearing by torch-light!—Don't you think I would do to run a circus, Mrs. Falchion?—Stand at the

door, and shout, "Here's where you get the worth of your money"?'

Mrs. Falchion laughed. 'I am sure you and I will be good friends; you are amusing. And, to be perfectly frank with you, I am very weary of trying to live in the intellectual altitudes of Dr. Marmion—and The Padre.'

I had never seen her in a greater strain of gaiety. It had almost a kind of feverishness — as if she relished fully the position she held toward Roscoe and Ruth, her power over their future, and her belief (as I think was in her mind then) that she could bring back to herself Roscoe's old allegiance. That she believed this, I was convinced; that she would never carry it out, was just as strong: for I, though only the chorus in the drama, might one day find it in my power to become, for a moment, one of the principal actors,—from which position I had declined one day when humiliated before Mrs. Falchion on the *Fulvia.* Boyd Madras was in my mind.

After a few minutes we parted, agreeing to meet again in the valley in the evening. I had promised, as Mrs. Falchion had suggested, to escort her and Justine Caron from the summer hotel to the mill. Roscoe had duties at both Viking and Sunburst and would not join us until we all met in the

evening. Mr. Devlin and Ruth rode away towards Sunburst. Mrs. Falchion, Justine, and myself travelled slowly up the hill-side, talking chiefly upon the events of the morning. Mrs. Falchion appeared to admire greatly the stalwart character of Mr. Devlin; in a few swift, complimentary words disposed of Ruth; and then made many inquiries concerning Roscoe's work, my own position, and the length of my stay in the mountains; and talked upon many trivial matters, never once referring—as it seemed to me, purposely—to our past experiences on the *Fulvia*, nor making any inquiry concerning any one except Belle Treherne.

She showed no surprise when I told her that I expected to marry Miss Treherne. She congratulated me with apparent frankness, and asked for Miss Treherne's address, saying she would write to her. As soon as she had left Roscoe's presence she had dropped all enigmatical words and phrases, and, during this hour I was with her, was the tactful, accomplished woman of the world, with the one present object: to make her conversation agreeable, and to keep things on the surface. Justine Caron scarcely spoke during the whole of our walk, although I addressed myself to her frequently. But I could see that she watched Mrs. Falchion's face curiously; and I believe that at

this time her instinct was keener by far to read what was in Mrs. Falchion's mind than my own, though I knew much more of the hidden chain of events connecting Mrs. Falchion's life and Galt Roscoe's.

I parted from them at the door of the hotel, made my way down to Roscoe's house at the ravine, and busied myself for the greater part of the day in writing letters, and reading on the coping. About sunset I called for Mrs. Falchion, and found her and Justine Caron ready and waiting. There was nothing eventful in our talk as we came down the mountain-side towards Viking—Justine Caron's presence prevented that. It was dusk when we reached the valley. As yet the mills were all dark. The only lights visible were in the low houses lining the banks of the river. Against the mountain-side there seemed to hang one bunch of flame like a star, large, red, and weird. It was a torch burning in front of Phil Boldrick's hut. We made our way slowly to the mill, and found Mr. Devlin, Ruth, and Roscoe, with Ruth's sister, and one or two other friends, expecting us.

'Well,' said Mr. Devlin heartily, 'I have kept the show waiting for you. The house is all dark, but I guess you'll see a transformation scene pretty quick. Come out,' he continued, 'and let us get the

front seats. They are all stalls here; nobody has a box except Boldrick, and it is up in the flies.'

'Mr. Devlin,' said Mrs Falchion, 'I purpose to see this show not only from the stalls, but from the box in the flies. Therefore, during the first act, I shall be here in front of the footlights. During the second act I shall be aloft like Tom Bowling——'

'In other words——' began Mr. Devlin.

'In other words,' added Mrs. Falchion, 'I am going to see the valley and hear your great horn blow, from up there!' She pointed towards the star in front of Phil's hut.

'All right,' said Mr. Devlin; 'but you will excuse me if I say that I don't particularly want anybody to see this performance from where Tom Bowling bides.'

We left the office and went out upon the platform, a little distance from the mill. Mr. Devlin gave a signal, touched a wire, and immediately it seemed as if the whole valley was alight. The mill itself was in a blaze of white. It was transfigured—a fairy palace, just as the mud barges in the Suez Canal had been transformed by the search-light of the *Fulvia*. For the moment, in the wonder of change from darkness to light, the valley became the picture of a dream. Every man

was at his post in the mill, and in an instant work was going on as we had seen it in the morning. Then, all at once, there came a great roar, as it were from the very heart of the mill,—a deep diapason, dug out of the throat of the hills: the big whistle.

'It sounds mournful—like a great animal in pain,' said Mrs. Falchion. 'You might have got one more cheerful.'

'Wait till it gets tuned up,' said Mr. Devlin. 'It hasn't had a chance to get the burs out of its throat. It will be very fine as soon as the engineman knows how to manage it.'

'Yes,' said Ruth, interposing, 'a little toning down would do it good—it is shaking the windows in your office; feel this platform tremble!'

'Well, I bargained for a big whistle and I've got it: and I guess they'll know if ever there's a fire in the town!'

Just as he said this, Roscoe gave a cry, and pointed. We all turned, and saw a sight that made Ruth Devlin cover her face with her hands and Mrs. Falchion stand horror-stricken. There, coming down the cable with the speed of lightning, was the cage. In it was a man — Phil Boldrick. With a cry and a smothered oath, Mr. Devlin sprang toward the machinery, Roscoe with him. There

was nobody near it, but they saw a boy whose duty it was that night to manage the cable, running towards it. Roscoe was the first to reach the lever; but it was too late. He partially stopped the cage, but only partially. It came with a dull, sickening thud to the ground, and Phil Boldrick—Phil Boldrick's broken, battered body—was thrown out.

A few minutes later, Boldrick was lying in Mr. Devlin's office.

Ill luck for Viking in the hour of her success. Phil's shattered hulk is drifting. The masts have gone by the board, the pilot from the captain's side. Only the man's 'unconquerable soul' is on the bridge, watching the craft dip at the bow, till the waters, their sport out, should hugely swallow it.

We were all gathered round. Phil had asked to see the lad who, by neglecting the machinery for a moment, had wrecked his life. 'My boy,' he said, 'you played an ugly game. It was a big mistake. I haven't any grudge agen you, but be glad I'm not one that 'd haunt you for your cussed foolishness. . . . There, now, I feel better: that's off my mind!'

'If you're wanting to show remorse or anything,' he continued, 'there's my friend Mr. Roscoe, The Padre—he's all right, you understand!—Are you

there? . . . Why don't you speak?' He stretched out his hand. The lad took it, but he could not speak: he held it and sobbed.

Then Phil understood. His brow wrinkled with a sudden trouble. He said: 'There, never mind. I'm dying, but it isn't what I expected. It doesn't smart nor tear much; not more than river-rheumatism. P'r'aps I wouldn't mind it at all if I could see."

For Phil was entirely blind now. The accident had destroyed his remaining eye. Being blind, he had already passed that first corridor of death—darkness.

Roscoe stooped over him, took his hand, and spoke quietly to him. Phil knew the voice, and said with a faint smile: 'Do you think they'd plant me with muni*cip*al honours?—honours to pardners?'

'We'll see to that, Phil,' said Mr. Devlin from behind the clergyman.

Phil recognised the voice. 'You think that nobody'll kick at making it official?'

'Not one, Phil.'

'And maybe they wouldn't mind firin' a volley —*Lights out*, as it were: and blow the big whistle? It'd look sociable, wouldn't it?'

'There'll be a volley and the whistle, Phil,—if you have to go,' said Mr. Devlin.

There was a silence, then the reply came musingly: 'I guess I hev to go. . . . I'd hev liked to see the corporation runnin' longer, but maybe I can trust the boys.'

A river-driver at the door said in a deep voice: 'By the holy! yes, you can trust us.'

'Thank you kindly. . . . If it doesn't make any difference to the rest, I'd like to be alone with The Padre for a little—not for religion, you understand, —for I go as I stayed, and I hev my views,—but for private business.'

Slowly, awkwardly, the few river-drivers passed out—Devlin and Mrs. Falchion and Ruth and I with them—for I could do nothing now for him —he was broken all to pieces. Roscoe told me afterwards what happened then.

'Padre,' he said to Roscoe, 'are we alone?'

'Quite alone, Phil.'

'Well, I hevn't any crime to tell, and the business isn't weighty; but I hev a pal at Danger Mountain——' He paused.

'Yes, Phil?'

'He's low down in s'ciety; but he's square, and we've had the same blanket for many a day together. I crossed him first on the Panama level. I was broke—stoney broke. He'd been shipwrecked, and was ditto. He'd been in the South

Seas; I in Nicaragua. We travelled up through Mexico and Arizona, and then through California to the Canadian Rockies. At last we camped at Danger Mountain, a Hudson's Bay fort, and stayed there. It was a roughish spot, but we didn't mind that. Every place isn't Viking. One night we had a difference—not a quarrel, mind you, but a difference. He was for lynchin' a fellow called Piccadilly, a swell that'd come down in the world, bringin' the worst tricks of his tribe with him. He'd never been a bony fidy gentleman—just an imitation. He played sneak with the daughter of Five Fingers, an Injin chief. We'd set store by that girl. There wasn't one of us rough nuts but respected her. She was one of the few beautiful Injin women I've seen. Well, it come out that Piccadilly had ruined her, and one morning she was found dead. It drove my pal well-nigh crazy. Not that she was anything partik'ler to him; but the thing took hold of him unusual.'

Now that I know all concerning Roscoe's past life, I can imagine that this recital must have been swords at his heart. The whole occurrence is put down minutely in his diary, but there is no word of comment upon it.

Phil had been obliged to stop for pain, and,

after Roscoe had adjusted the bandages, he continued:

'My pal and the others made up their minds they'd lynch Piccadilly; they wouldn't give him the benefit of the doubt—for it wasn't certain that the girl hadn't killed herself. . . . Well, I went to Piccadilly, and give him the benefit. He left, and skipped the rope. Not, p'r'aps, that he ought to hev got away, but once he'd showed me a letter from his mother,—he was drunk too at the time,—and I remembered when my brother Rodney was killed in the Black Hills, and how my mother took it; so I give him the tip to travel quick.'

He paused and rested. Then presently continued:

'Now, Padre, I've got four hundred dollars,—the most I ever had at one time in my life. And I'd like it to go to my old pal—though we had that difference, and parted. I guess we respect each other about the same as we ever did. And I wish you'd write it down so that the thing would be muni*cip*al.'

Roscoe took pencil and paper and said: 'What's his name, Phil?'

'Sam—Tonga Sam.'

'But that isn't all his name?'

'No, I s'pose not, but it's all he ever had in

general use. He'd got it because he'd been to the Tonga Islands and used to yarn about them. Put "Tonga Sam, Phil Boldrick's Pal at Danger Mountain, ult,"—add the "ult," it's c'rrect.—That'll find him. And write him these words, and if you ever see him say them to him—"Phil Boldrick never had a pal that crowded Tonga Sam."

When the document was written, Roscoe read it aloud, then both signed it, Roscoe guiding the battered hand over the paper.

This done, there was a moment's pause, and then Phil said: 'I'd like to be in the open. I was born in the open—on the Saskatchewan. Take me out, Padre.'

Roscoe stepped to the door, and silently beckoned to Devlin and myself. We carried him out, and put him beside a pine tree.

'Where am I now?' he said.

'Under the white pine, Phil.'

'That's right. Face me to the north.'

We did so. Minutes passed in silence. Only the song of the saw was heard, and the welting of the river.

'Padre,' he said at last hurriedly, 'lift me up, so's I can breathe.'

This was done.

'Am I facin' the big mill?

'Yes.'

'That's c'rrect. And the 'lectric light is burnin' in the mill and in the town, an' the saws are all goin'?'

'Yes.'

'By gracious, yes—you can hear 'em! Don't they scrunch the stuff, though!' He laughed a little. 'Mr. Devlin an' you and me hev been pretty smart, hevn't we?'

Then a spasm caught him, and after a painful pause he called: 'It's the biggest thing in cables. —Stand close in the cage. . . . Feel her swing— Safe, you bet, if he stands by the lever! . . .'

His face lighted with the last gleam of living, and he said slowly: 'I hev a pal — at Danger Mountain.'

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE TROUGH OF THE WINDS.

THE three days following the events recorded in the preceding chapter were notable to us all. Because my own affairs and experiences are of the least account, I shall record them first: they will at least throw a little light on the history of people who appeared previously in this tale, and disappeared suddenly when the *Fulvia* reached London, to make room for others.

The day after Phil Boldrick's death I received a letter from Hungerford, and also one from Belle Treherne. Hungerford had left the Occidental Company's service, and had been fortunate enough to get the position of first officer on a line of steamers running between England and the West Indies. The letter was brusque, incisive, and forceful, and declared that, once he got his foot firmly planted in his new position, he would get married and be done with it. He said that Clovelly

the novelist had given a little dinner at his chambers in Piccadilly, and that the guests were all our fellow-passengers by the *Fulvia;* among them Colonel Ryder, the bookmaker, Blackburn the Queenslander, and himself.

This is extracted from the letter:—

'. . . Clovelly was in rare form.—Don't run away with the idea that he's eating his heart out because you came in just ahead in the race for Miss Treherne. For my part—but, never mind!—You had phenomenal luck, and you will be a phenomenal fool if you don't arrange for an early marriage. You are a perfect baby in some things. Don't you know that the time a woman most yearns for a man is when she has refused him? And Clovelly is here on the ground, and they are in the same set, and though I'd take my oath she would be loyal to you if you were ten thousand miles from here for ten years, so far as a promise is concerned, yet remember that a promise and a fancy are two different things. We may do what's right for the fear o' God, and not love Him either. Marmion, let the marriage bells be rung early—a maiden's heart is a ticklish thing. . . .

'But Clovelly was in rare form, as I said; and the bookmaker, who had for the first time read a novel of his, amiably quoted from it, and criticised it during the dinner, till the place reeked with laughter. At first every one stared aghast ("stared aghast!"—how is that for literary form?); but when Clovelly gurgled, and then *haw-hawed* till he couldn't lift his champagne, the rest of us followed in a double-quick. And the bookmaker simply sat calm and earnest with his eyeglass in his eye, and never did more than gently smile. "See here," he said ever so candidly of Clovelly's best character, a serious, inscrutable kind of a man, the dignified figure in the book; "I liked the way you drew that muff. He was such an awful outsider, wasn't he? All talk, and hypocrite down to his heels. And when you married him to that lady who nibbled her food in public and gorged in the back pantry, and went "slumming" and made shoulder-strings for the parson—oh, I know the kind!"—[This was Clovelly's heroine, whom he had

tried to draw, as he said himself, "with a perfect sincerity and a lovely worldly-mindedness, and a sweet creation altogether."] "I said, that's poetic justice, that's the refinement of retribution. Any other yarn-spinner would have killed the male idiot by murder, or a drop from a precipice, or a lingering fever; but Clovelly did the thing with delicate torture. He said, 'Go to blazes,' and he fixed up that marriage—and there you are! Clovelly, I drink to you; you are a master!"

'Clovelly acknowledged beautifully, and brought off a fine thing about the bookmaker having pocketed £5000 at the Derby, then complimented Colonel Ryder on his success as a lecturer in London (pretty true, by the way), and congratulated Blackburn on his coming marriage with Mrs. Callendar, the Tasmanian widow. What he said of myself I am not going to repeat; but it was *salaaming* all round, with the liquor good, and fun bang over the bulwarks.

'How is Roscoe? I didn't see as much of him as you did, but I liked him. Take my tip for it, *that woman* will make trouble for him some day. She is the biggest puzzle I ever met. I never could tell whether she liked him or hated him; but it seems to me that either would be the ruin of any "Christom man." I know she saw something of him while she was in London, because her quarters were next to those of my aunt the dowager (whose heart the gods soften at my wedding!) in Queen Anne's Mansions, S.W., and who actually liked Mrs. F., called on her, and asked her to dinner, and Roscoe too, whom she met at *her* place. I believe my aunt would have used her influence to get him a good living, if he had played his cards properly; but I expect he wouldn't be patronised, and he went for a "mickonaree," as they say in the South Seas. . . . Well, I'm off to the Spicy Isles, then back again to marry a wife! "Go thou and do likewise."

'By the way, have you ever heard of or seen Boyd Madras since he slipped our cable at Aden and gave the world another chance? I trust he will spoil *her* wedding—if she ever tries to have one. May I be there to see!'

Because we shall see nothing more of Hungerford till we finally dismiss the drama, I should

like to say that this voyage of his to the West Indies made his fortune—that is, it gave him command of one of the finest ships in the English merchant service. In a storm a disaster occurred to his vessel, his captain was washed overboard, and he was obliged to take command. His skill, fortitude, and great manliness, under tragical circumstances, sent his name booming round the world; and, coupled, as it was, with a singular act of personal valour, he had his pick of all vacancies and possible vacancies in the merchant service, boy (or little more) as he was. I am glad to say that he is now a happy husband and father too.

The letter from Belle Treherne mentioned having met Clovelly several times of late, and, with Hungerford's words hot in my mind, I determined, though I had perfect confidence in her, as in myself, to be married at Christmas-time. Her account of the courtship of Blackburn and Mrs. Callendar was as amusing as her description of an evening which the bookmaker had spent with her father, when he said he was going to marry an actress whom he had seen at Drury Lane Theatre in a racing drama. This he subsequently did, and she ran him a breakneck race for many a day, but never making him unhappy or less re-

sourceful. His verdict, and his only verdict, upon Mrs. Falchion had been confided to Blackburn, who in turn confided it to Clovelly, who passed it on to me.

He said: 'A woman is like a horse. Make her beautiful, give her a high temper and a bit of bad luck in her youth, and she'll take her revenge out of life; even though she runs straight, and wins straight every time; till she breaks her heart one day over a lost race. After that she is good to live with for ever. A heart-break for that kind is their salvation: without it they go on breaking the hearts of others.'

As I read Belle's and Hungerford's letters my thoughts went back again—as they did so often indeed—to the voyage of the *Fulvia*, and then to Mrs. Falchion's presence in the Rocky Mountains. There was a strange destiny in it all, and I had no pleasant anticipations about the end; for, even if she could or did do Roscoe no harm, so far as his position was concerned, I saw that she had already begun to make trouble between him and Ruth.

That day which saw poor Boldrick's death put her in a conflicting light to me. Now I thought I saw in her unusual gentleness, again an unusual irony, an almost flippant and cruel worldliness;

and though at the time she was most touched by the accident, I think her feeling of horror at it made her appear to speak in a way which showed her unpleasantly to Mr. Devlin and his daughter. It may be, however, that Ruth Devlin saw further into her character than I guessed, and understood the strange contradictions of her nature. But I shall, I suppose, never know absolutely about that; nor does it matter much now.

The day succeeding Phil's death was Sunday, and the little church at Viking was full. Many fishers had come over from Sunburst. It was evident that people expected Roscoe to make some reference to Phil's death in his sermon, or, at least, have a part of the service appropriate. By a singular chance the first morning lesson was David's lamentation for Saul and Jonathan. Roscoe had a fine voice. He read easily, naturally —like a cultivated layman, not like a clergyman; like a man who wished to convey the simple meaning of what he read, reverently, honestly. On the many occasions when I heard him read the service, I noticed that he never changed the opening sentence, though there were, of course, others from which to choose. He drew the people to their feet always with these words, spoken as it were directly to them:—

'*When the wicked man turneth away from the wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.*'

I noticed this morning that he instantly attracted the attention of every one, and held it, with the first words of the lesson:

'*The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!*'

It seemed to me as if the people at first almost tried to stop breathing, so intense was the feeling. Mrs. Falchion was sitting very near me, and though she had worn her veil up at first, as I uncharitably put it then, to disconcert him, she drew it rather quickly down as his reading proceeded; but, so far as I could see, she never took her eyes off his face through the whole service; and, impelled in spite of myself, I watched her closely. Though Ruth Devlin was sitting not far from her, she scarcely looked that way.

Evidently the text of the sermon was not chosen that it might have some association with Phil's death, but there was a kind of simple grandeur, and certainly cheerful stalwartness, in his interpretation and practical rendering of the text:

'*Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed*

garments from Bozrah? . . . travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.'

A man was talking to men sensibly, directly, quietly. It was impossible to resist the wholesome eloquence of his temperament; he was a revelation of humanity: what he said had life.

I said to myself, as I had before, Is it possible that this man ever did anything unmanly?

After the service, James Devlin—with Ruth—came to Roscoe and myself, and asked us to lunch at his house. Roscoe hesitated, but I knew it was better for him not to walk up the hills and back again immediately after luncheon; so I accepted for us both; and Ruth gave me a grateful look. Roscoe seemed almost anxious not to be alone with Ruth,—not from any cowardly feeling, but because he was perplexed by the old sense of coming catastrophe, which, indeed, poor fellow, he had some cause to feel. He and Mr. Devlin talked of Phil's funeral and the arrangements that had been made, and during the general conversation Ruth and I dropped behind.

Quite abruptly she said to me: 'Who *is* Mrs. Falchion?

'A widow—it is said—rich, unencumbered,' I as abruptly answered.

'But I suppose even widows may have pedigrees, and be conjugated in the past tense,' was the cool reply. She drew herself up a little proudly.

I was greatly astonished. Here was a girl living most of her life in these mountains, having only had a few years of social life in the East, practising with considerable skill those arts of conversation so much cultivated in metropolitan drawing-rooms. But I was a very dull fellow then, and had yet to learn that women may develop in a day to wonderful things.

'Well,' I said in reply, 'I suppose not. But I fear I cannot answer regarding the pedigree, nor a great deal about the past, for I only met her under two years ago.'

'And yet I have imagined that you knew her pretty well, and that Mr. Roscoe knew her even better—perhaps,' she said suggestively.

'That is so,' I tried to say with apparent frankness, 'for she lived in the South Seas with her father, and Roscoe knew her there.'

'She is a strange woman, and quite heartless in some ways; and yet, do you know, I like her while I dislike her; and I cannot tell why.'

'Do not try to tell,' I answered, 'for she has the gift of making people do both.—I think she likes and dislikes herself—as well as others.'

'As well — as others, —' she replied slowly. 'Yes, I think I have noticed that. You see,' she added, 'I do not look at people as most girls of my age: and perhaps I am no better for that. But Mrs. Falchion's introduction to me occurred in such peculiar circumstances, and the coincidence of your knowing her was so strange, that my interest is not unnatural, I suppose.'

'On the contrary,' I said, 'I am only surprised that you have restrained your curiosity so much and so long. It was all very strange; though the meeting was quite to be expected, as Mrs. Falchion herself explained that day. She had determined on coming over to the Pacific Coast; this place was in her way; it is a fashionable resort; and she stood a good chance of finding old friends.'

'Yes—of finding—old friends,' was the abstracted reply. 'I like Miss Caron, her companion, very much better than—most women I have met.'

This was not what she was going to say, but she checked herself, lest she might be suspected of thinking uncharitably of Mrs. Falchion. I, of course, agreed with her, and told her the story of Galt Roscoe and Hector Caron, and of Justine's earnestness regarding her fancied debt to Roscoe.

I saw that the poison of anxiety had entered the girl's mind; and it might, perhaps, bear fruit of no

engaging quality. In her own home however, it was a picture to see her with her younger sisters and brothers, and invalid mother. She went about very brightly and sweetly among them, speaking to them as if she was mother to them all, angel of them all, domestic court for them all; as indeed she was. Here there seemed no disturbing element in her; a close observer might even have said (and in this case I fancy I was that) that she had no mind or heart for anything or anybody but these few of her blood and race. Hers was a fine nature —high, wholesome, unselfish. Yet it struck me sadly also, to see how the child-like in her, and her young spirit, had been so early set to the task of defence and protection: a mother at whose breasts a child had never hung; maternal, but without the relieving joys of maternity.

I knew that she would carry through her life that too watchful, too anxious tenderness; that to her last day she would look back and not remember that she had a childhood once; because while yet a child she had been made into a woman.

Such of the daughters of men make life beautiful; but themselves are selfish who do not see the almost intolerable pathos of unselfishness and sacrifice. At the moment I was bitter with the thought that, if Mrs. Falchion determined anything

which could steal away this girl's happiness from her, even for a time, I should myself seek for some keen revenge—which was, as may appear, in my power. But I could not go to Mrs. Falchion now and say,—'You intend some harm to these two: for God's sake go away and don't trouble them!' I had no real ground for making such a request. Besides, if there was any catastrophe, any trouble, coming, or possible, that might hasten it, or, at least, give it point.

I could only wait. I had laid another plan, and from a telegram I had received in answer to one I had sent, I believed it was working. I did not despair. I had, indeed, sent a cable to my agent in England, which was to be forwarded to the address given me by Boyd Madras at Aden. I had got a reply saying that Boyd Madras had sailed for Canada by the Allan Line of steamers. I had then telegraphed to a lawyer I knew in Montreal, and he had replied that he was on the track of the wanderer.

All Viking and Sunburst turned out to Phil Boldrick's funeral. Everything was done that he had requested. The great whistle roared painfully, revolvers and guns were fired over his grave, and the new-formed corporation appeared. He was buried on the top of a foot-hill, which, to this

day, is known as Boldrick's Own. The grave was covered by an immense flat stone bearing his name. But a flagstaff was erected near,—no stouter one stands on Beachy Head or elsewhere,—and on it was engraved—

PHIL BOLDRICK,
Buried with Municipal Honours
on the Thirtieth day of June 1883.

This to his Memory, and for the honour of
Viking and Sunburst.

'Padre,' said a river-driver to Galt Roscoe after the rites were finished, 'that was a man you could trust.'

'Padre, added another, 'that was a man you could bank on, and draw your interest reg'lar. He never done a mean thing, and he never pal-ed with a mean man. He wasn't for getting his teeth on edge like some in the valley. He didn't always side with the majority, and he had a gift of doin' things on the square.'

Others spoke in similar fashion, and then Viking went back to work, and we to our mountain cottage.

Many days passed quietly. I saw that Galt Roscoe wished to speak to me on the subject perplexing him, but I did not help him. I knew that it would come in good time, and the farther off it was the better. I dreaded to hear what he

had to tell, lest, in spite of my confidence in him, it should really be a thing which, if made public, must bring ruin. During the evenings of these days he wrote much in his diary—the very book that lies by me now. Writing seemed a relief to him, for he was more cheerful afterwards. I know that he had received letters from the summer hotel, but whether they were from Mrs. Falchion or Justine Caron I was not then aware, though I afterwards came to know that one of them was from Justine, asking him if she might call on him. He guessed that the request was connected with Hector Caron's death; and, of course, gave his consent. During this time he did not visit Ruth Devlin, nor did he mention her name. As for myself, I was sick of the whole business, and wished it well over, whatever the result.

I make here a few extracts from Roscoe's diary, to show the state of his mind at this period:—

'Can a man never get away from the consequences of his wickedness, even though he repents? . . . Restitution is necessary as well as repentance.—But when one cannot make restitution, when it is impossible!—What then? I suppose one has to reply, Well, you have to suffer, that is all. . . . Poor Alo! To think that after all these years, you can strike me!

'There is something malicious in the way Mercy Falchion crosses my path. What she knows, she knows;—and what she can do if she chooses, I must endure.—I cannot love Mercy Falchion again, and that, I suppose, is the last thing she would wish now. I cannot bring Alo back. But how does that concern *her*? Why does she

hate me so? For, underneath her kindest words,—and they are kind sometimes,—I can detect the note of enmity, of calculating scorn. . . . I wish I could go to Ruth and tell her all, and ask her to decide if she can take a man with such a past. . . . What a thing it is to have had a clean record of unflinching manliness at one's back!'

I add another extract:—

'Phil's story of Danger Mountain struck like ice at my heart. There was a horrible irony in the thing: that it should be told to me, of all the world, and at such a time! Some would say, I suppose, that it was the arrangement of Providence. Not to speak it profanely, it seems to be the achievement of the devil. The torture was too malicious for God. . . .

'Phil's letter has gone to his pal at Danger Mountain. . . .'

The fourth day after the funeral Justine Caron came to see Galt Roscoe. This was the substance of their conversation, as I came to know long afterwards.

'Monsieur,' she said, 'I have come to pay something of a debt which I owe to you. It is a long time since you gave my poor Hector burial, but I have never forgotten, and I have brought you at last—you must not shake your head so—the money you spent. . . But you *must* take it. I should be miserable if you did not. The money is all that I can repay; the kindness is for memory and gratitude always.'

He looked at her wonderingly, earnestly, she seemed so unworldly, standing there, her life's ambition not stirring beyond duty to her dead. If

goodness makes beauty, she was beautiful; and yet, besides all that, she had a warm, absorbing eye, a soft, rounded cheek, and she carried in her face the light of a cheerful, engaging spirit.

'Will it make you happier if I take the money?' he said at last, and his voice showed how she had moved him.

'So much happier!' she answered, and she put a roll of notes into his hand.

'Then I will take it,' he replied, with a manner not too serious, and he looked at the notes carefully; 'but only what I actually spent, remember; what I told you when you wrote me at Hector's death; not this ample interest. You forget, Miss Caron, that your brother was my friend.'

'No, I cannot forget that. It lives with me,' she rejoined softly. But she took back the surplus notes. 'And I have my gratitude left still,' she added, smiling.

'Believe me there is no occasion for gratitude. Why, what less could one do?'

'One could pass by on the other side.'

'He was not fallen among thieves,' was his reply; 'he was among Englishmen, the old allies of the French.

'But the Priests and the Levites, people of his own country—Frenchmen—passed him by. They

were infamous in falsehood, cruel to him and to me.—You are an Englishman ; you have heart and kindness.'

He hesitated, then he gravely said : 'Do not trust Englishmen more than you trust your own countrymen. We are selfish even in our friendships often. We stick to one person, and to benefit that one we sacrifice others. Have you found all Englishmen —and *women* unselfish?' He looked at her steadily ; but immediately repented that he had asked the question, for he had in his mind one whom they both knew, too well, perhaps ; and he added quickly,—'You see, I am not kind.'

They were standing now in the sunlight just outside the house. His hands were thrust down in the pockets of his linen coat; her hands opening and shutting her parasol slightly. They might, from their appearance, have been talking of very inconsequent things.

Her eyes lifted sorrowfully to his. 'Ah, monsieur,' she rejoined, 'there are two times when one must fear a woman.' She answered his question more directly than he could have conjectured. But she felt that she must warn him.

'I do not understand,' he said.

'Of course you do not. Only women themselves

understand that the two times when one must fear a woman are when she hates, and when she loves —after a kind. When she gets wicked or mad enough to hate, either through jealousy or because she cannot love where she would, she is merciless. She does not know the honour of the game. She has no pity. Then, sometimes when she loves in a way, she is, as you say, most selfish. I mean a love which is — not possible. Then she does some mad act—all women are a little mad sometimes;—most of us wish to be good, but we are quicksilver. . . .'

Roscoe's mind had been working fast. He saw she meant to warn him against Mrs. Falchion. His face flushed slightly. He knew that Justine had thought well of him, and now he knew also that she suspected something not creditable or, at least, hazardous in his life

'And the man—the man whom the woman hates?'

'When the woman hates — and loves too, the man is in danger.'

'Do you know of such a man?' he almost shrinkingly said.

'If I did I would say to him, The world is wide. There is no glory in fighting a woman who will not be fair in battle. She will say what may

appear to be true, but what she knows in her own heart to be false—false and bad.'

Roscoe now saw that Justine had more than an inkling of his story.

He said calmly: 'You would advise that man to flee from danger?'

'Yes, to flee,' she replied hurriedly, with a strange anxiety in her eyes; 'for sometimes a woman is not satisfied with words that kill. She becomes less than human, and is like Jael.'

Justine knew that Mrs. Falchion held a sword over Roscoe's career; she guessed that Mrs. Falchion both cared for him and hated him too; but she did not know the true reason of the hatred, —that only came out afterwards. Woman-like, she exaggerated in order that she might move him; but her motive was good, and what she said was not out of keeping with the facts of life.

'The man's life even might be in danger?' he asked.

'It might.'

'But surely that is not so dreadful,' he still said calmly. 'Death is not the worst of evils.'

'No, not the worst; one has to think of the evil word as well. The evil word can be outlived; but the man must think of those who really love him, —who would die to save him,—and whose hearts

would break if he were killed. Love can outlive slander, but it is bitter when it has to outlive both slander and death. It is easy to love with joy so long as both live, though there are worlds between. Thoughts fly and meet; but Death makes the great division. . . . Love can only live in the pleasant world.

Very abstractedly he said: 'Is it a pleasant world to you?'

She did not reply directly to that, but answered: 'Monsieur, if you know of such a man as I speak of, warn him to fly.' And she raised her eyes from the ground and looked earnestly at him. Now her face was slightly flushed, she looked almost beautiful.

'I know of such a man,' he replied, 'but he will not go. He has to answer to his own soul and his conscience. He is not without fear, but it is only fear for those who care for him, be they ever so few. And he hopes that they will be brave enough to face his misery, if it must come. For we know that courage has its hour of comfort. . . . When such a man as you speak of has his dark hour he will stand firm.'

Then with a great impulse he added: 'This man whom I know did wrong, but he was falsely accused of doing a still greater. The consequence

of the first thing followed him. He could never make restitution. Years went by. Some one knew that dark spot in his life—his Nemesis.'

'The worst Nemesis in this life, monsieur, is always a woman,' she interrupted.

'Perhaps she is the surest,' he continued. 'The woman faced him in the hour of his peace and——' he paused. His voice was husky.

'Yes, "and," monsieur?——'

'And he knows that she would ruin him, and kill his heart and destroy his life.'

'The waters of Marah are bitter,' she murmured, and she turned her face away from him to the woods. There was no trouble there. The birds were singing, black squirrels were jumping from bough to bough, and they could hear the tapping of the woodpecker. She slowly drew on her gloves, as if for occupation.

He spoke at length as though thinking aloud: 'But he knows that, whatever comes, life has had for him more compensations than he deserves. For, in his trouble, a woman came, and said kind words, and would have helped him if she could.'

'There were *two* women,' she said solemnly.

'Two women?' he repeated slowly.

'The one stayed in her home and prayed, and the other came.'

'I do not understand,' he said: and he spoke truly.

'Love is always praying for its own, therefore one woman prayed at home. The other woman who came was full of gratitude, for the man was noble, she owed him a great debt, and she believed in him always. She knew that if at any time in his life he had done wrong, the sin was without malice or evil.'

'The woman is gentle and pitiful with him, God knows.'

She spoke quietly now, and her gravity looked strange in one so young.

'God knows she is just, and would see him justly treated. She is so far beneath him! and yet one can serve a friend though one is humble and poor.'

'How strange,' he rejoined, 'that the man should think himself miserable who is befriended in such a way! . . . Justine Caron, he will carry to his grave the kindness of this woman.'

'Monsieur,' she added humbly, yet with a brave light in her eyes, 'it is good to care whether the wind blows bitter or kind. Every true woman is a mother, though she have no child. She longs to protect the suffering, because to protect is in her so far as God is. . . . Well, this woman cares that way. . . .' She held out her hand to say good-bye.

Her look was simple, direct, and kind. Their parting words were few and unremarkable.

Roscoe watched Justine Caron as she passed out into the shade of the woods, and he said to himself, —'Gratitude like that is a wonderful thing.' He should have said something else, but he did not know, and she did not wish him to know: and he never knew.

CHAPTER XVI.

A DUEL IN ARCADY.

THE more I thought of Mrs. Falchion's attitude towards Roscoe, the more I was puzzled. But I had at last reduced the position to this:— Years ago Roscoe had cared for her and she had not cared for him. Angered or indignant at her treatment of him, Roscoe's affections declined unworthily elsewhere. Then came a catastrophe of some kind, in which Alo (whoever she might be) suffered. The secret of this catastrophe Mrs. Falchion, as I believe, held. There was a parting, a lapse of years, and then the meeting on the *Fulvia:* with it, partial restoration of Mrs. Falchion's influence, then its decline, and then a complete change of position. It was now Mrs. Falchion that cared, and Roscoe that shunned. It perplexed me that there seemed to be behind Mrs. Falchion's present regard for Roscoe, some weird expression of vengeance, as though somehow she had been

wronged, and it was her duty to punish. In no other way was the position definable. That Roscoe would never marry her was certain to my mind. That he could not marry her now was also certain —to me;—I had the means to prevent it. That she wished to marry him I was not sure, though she undoubtedly cared for him. Remained, therefore, the supposition that if he cared for her she would do him no harm, as to his position. But if he married Ruth, disaster would come—Roscoe himself acknowledged that she held the key of his fortunes.

Upon an impulse, and as a last resort, I had taken action whereby in some critical moment I might be able to wield a power over Mrs. Falchion. I was playing a blind game, but it was the only card I held. I had heard from the lawyer in Montreal that Madras, under another name, had gone to the prairie country to enter the mounted police. I had then telegraphed to Winnipeg, but had got no answer.

I had seen her many times, but we had never, except very remotely, touched upon the matter which was uppermost in both our minds. It was not my wish to force the situation. I knew that my opportunity would come wherein to spy upon the mind of the enemy. It came. On the evening

that Justine Caron called upon Roscoe, I accidentally met Mrs. Falchion in the grounds of the hotel. She was with several people, and as I spoke to her she made a little gesture of invitation. I went over, was introduced to her companions, and then she said:

'Dr. Marmion, I have not yet made that visit to the salmon-fishers at Sunburst. Unfortunately, on the days when I called on Miss Devlin, my time was limited. But now I have a thirst for adventure, and time hangs heavy. Will you perform your old office of escort, and join a party, which we can make up here, to go to-morrow?'

I had little love for Mrs. Falchion, but I consented, because it seemed to me the chance had come for an effective talk with her; and I suggested that we should go late in the afternoon of the next day, and remain till night and see the Indians, the half-breeds, and white fishermen working by torch-light on the river. The proposition was accepted with delight.

Then the conversation turned upon the feud that existed between Viking and Sunburst, the river-drivers and the fishers. During the last few days, owing to the fact that there were a great many idle river-men about, the river-driving for the season being done, there had been more than one quarrel

of a serious nature at Sunburst. It had needed a great deal of watchfulness on the part of Mr Devlin and his supporters to prevent fighting. In Sunburst itself, Mr. Devlin had much personal influence. He was a man of exceedingly strong character, bold, powerful, persuasive. But this year there had been a large number of rough, adventurous characters among the river-men, and they seemed to take delight in making sport of, and even interfering with, the salmon-fishers. We talked of these things for some time, and then I took my leave. As I went, Mrs. Falchion stepped after me, tapped me on the arm, and said in a slow, indolent tone:

'Whenever you and I meet, Dr. Marmion, something happens — something strange. What particular catastrophe have you arranged for to-morrow? For you are, you know, the chorus to the drama.'

'Do not spoil the play,' I said, 'by anticipation.'

'One gets very weary of tragedy,' she retorted. 'Comedy would be a relief. Could you not manage it?'

'I do not know about to-morrow,' I said, 'as to a comedy. But I promise you that one of these days I will present to you the very finest comedy imaginable.'

'You speak oracularly,' she said; 'still, you are a professor, and professors always pose. But now, to be perfectly frank with you, I do not believe that any comedy you could arrange would be as effective as your own.'

'You have read *Much Ado about Nothing*,' I said.

'Oh, it is as good as that, is it?' she asked.

'Well, it has just as good a final situation,' I answered. She seemed puzzled, for she saw I spoke with some under-current of meaning. 'Mrs. Falchion,' I said to her suddenly and earnestly, 'I wish you to think between now and to-morrow of what I am just going to say to you.'

'It sounds like the task set an undergraduate, but go on,' she said.

'I wish you to think,' said I, 'of the fact that I helped to save your life.'

She flushed; an indignant look shot up in her face, and she said, her voice vibrating:

'What man would have done less?' Then, almost immediately after, as though repenting of what she had said, she continued in a lower tone and with a kind of impulsiveness uncommon to her,—'But you had courage, and I appreciate that; still, do not ask too much. Good-night.'

We parted at that, and did not meet again until

the next afternoon, when I joined her and her party at the summer hotel. Together we journeyed down to Sunburst.

It was the height of the salmon-fishing season. Sunburst lay cloyed among the products of field and forest and stream. At Viking one got the impression of a strong pioneer life, vibrant, eager and with a touch of Arcady. But viewed from a distance Sunburst seemed Arcady itself. It was built in green pastures, which stretched back on one side of the river, smooth, luscious, undulating to the foot-hills. This was on one side of the Whi-Whi River. On the other side was a narrow margin, and then a sheer wall of hills in exquisite verdure. The houses were of wood, and chiefly painted white, sweet and cool in the vast greenness. Cattle wandered shoulders deep in the rich grass, and fruit of all kinds was to be had for the picking. The population was strangely mixed. Men had drifted here from all parts of the world, sometimes with their families, sometimes without them. Many of them had settled here after mining at the Caribou field and other places on the Frazer River. Mexican, Portuguese, Canadian, Californian, Australian, Chinaman, and Coolie lived here, side by side, at ease in the quiet land, following a primitive occupation with primitive methods.

One could pick out the Indian section of the village, because not far from it was the Indian graveyard, with its scaffolding of poles and brush and its offerings for the dead. There were almost interminable rows of scaffolding on the river's edge and upon the high bank where hung the salmon drying in the sun. The river, as it ambled along, here over shallows, there over rapids and tiny waterfalls, was the pathway for millions and millions of salmon upon a pilgrimage to the West and North — to the happy hunting grounds of spawn. They came in droves so thick at times that, crowding up the little creeks which ran into the river, they filled them so completely as to dam up the water and make the courses a solid mass of living and dead fish. In the river itself they climbed the rapids and leaped the little waterfalls with incredible certainty; except where man had prepared his traps for them. Sometimes these traps were weirs or by-washes, made of long lateral tanks of wicker-work. Down among the boulders near the shore, scaffoldings were raised, and from these the fishermen with nets and wicker-work baskets caught the fish as they came up.

We wandered about during the afternoon immensely interested in all that we saw. During that time the party was much together, and my

conversation with Mrs. Falchion was general. We had supper at a quiet little tavern, idled away an hour in drinking in the pleasant scene; and when dusk came went out again to the banks of the river.

From the time we left the tavern to wander by the river I managed to be a good deal alone with Mrs. Falchion. I do not know whether she saw that I was anxious to speak with her privately, but I fancy she did. Whatever we had to say must, in the circumstances, however serious, be kept superficially unimportant. And, as it happened, our serious conference was carried on with an air of easy gossip, combined with a not artificial interest in all we saw. And there was much to see. Far up and down the river the fragrant dusk was spotted with the smoky red light of torches, and the atmosphere shook with shadows, through which ran the song of the river, more amiable than the song of the saw, and the low, weird cry of the Indians and white men as they toiled for salmon in the glare of the torches. Here upon a scaffolding a half-dozen swung their nets and baskets in the swift river, hauling up with their very long poles thirty or forty splendid fish in an hour; there at a small cascade, in great baskets sunk into the water, a couple of Indians caught and killed the

salmon that, in trying to leap the fall, plumped into the wicker-cage; beyond, others, more idle and less enterprising, speared the finny travellers, thus five hundred miles from home—the brave Pacific.

Upon the banks the cleaning and curing went on, the women and children assisting, and as the Indians and half-breeds worked they sang either the wild Indian melodies, snatches of brave old songs of the *voyageurs* of a past century, or hymns taught by the Jesuit missionaries in the persons of such noble men as Père Lacombe and Père Durieu, who have wandered up and down the vast plains of both sides of the Rockies telling an old story in a picturesque, heroic way. These old hymns were written in Chinook, that strange language,—French, English, Spanish, Indian,—arranged by the Hudson's Bay Company, which is, like the wampum-belt, a common tongue for tribes and peoples not speaking any language but their own. They were set to old airs—lullabies, chansons, barcarolles, serenades, taken out of the folk-lore of many lands. Time and again had these simple arcadian airs been sung as a prelude to some tribal act that would not bear the search-light of civilisation — little by the Indians east of the Rockies, for they have hard hearts and fierce tongues, but much by the Shuswaps, Siwashes, and other tribes

of the Pacific slope, whose natures are for peace more than for war; who, one antique day, drifted across from Japan or the Corea, and never, even in their wild, nomadic state, forgot their skill and craft in wood and gold and silver.

We sat on the shore and watched the scene for a time, saying nothing. Now and again, as from scaffolding to scaffolding, from boat to boat, and from house to house, the Chinook song rang and was caught up in a slow monotone, so not interfering with the toil, there came the sound of an Indian drum beaten indolently, or the rattle of dry hard sticks—a fantastic accompaniment.

'Does it remind you of the South Seas?' I said to Mrs. Falchion, as, with her chin on her hand, she watched the scene.

She drew herself up, almost with an effort, as though she had been lost in thought, and looked at me curiously for a moment. She seemed trying to call back her mind to consider my question. Presently she answered me: 'Very little. There is something finer, stronger here. The atmosphere has more nerve, the life more life. This is not a land for the idle or vicious, pleasant as it is.'

'What a thinker you are, Mrs. Falchion!'

She seemed to recollect herself suddenly. Her voice took on an inflection of satire. 'You say it,

with the air of a discoverer. With Columbus and Hervey and you, the world——' She stopped, laughing softly at the thrust, and moved the dust about with her foot.

'In spite of the sarcasm, I am going to add that I feel a personal satisfaction in your being a woman who does think, and acts more on thought than impulse.'

'"Personal satisfaction" sounds very royal and august. It is long, I imagine, since you took a —personal satisfaction—in me.'

I was not to be daunted. 'People who think a good deal and live a fresh, outdoor life—you do that—naturally act most fairly and wisely in time of difficulty—and *contretemps*.'

'But I had the impression that you thought I acted unfairly and unwisely—at such times!'

We had come exactly where I wanted. In our minds we were both looking at those miserable scenes on the *Fulvia*, when Madras sought to adjust the accounts of life and sorely muddled them.

'But,' said I, 'you are not the same woman that you were.'

'Indeed, Sir Oracle!' she answered: 'and by what necromancy do you know?'

'By none. I think you are sorry now—I hope you are—for what——'

She interrupted me indignantly. 'You go too far. You are almost—insolent. You said once that the matter should be buried, and yet here you work for an opportunity, Heaven knows why, to place me at a disadvantage!'

'Pardon me,' I answered; 'I said that I would never bring up those wretched scenes unless there was cause. There is cause.'

She got to her feet. 'What cause—what possible cause can there be?'

I met her eye firmly. 'I am bound to stand by my friend,' I said. 'And I can and will stand by him.'

'If it is a game of drawn swords, beware!' she retorted. 'You speak to me as if I were a common adventuress. You mistake me, and forget that you—of all men—have little margin of high morality on which to speculate.'

'No, I do not forget that,' I said, 'nor do I think of you as an adventuress. But I am sure you hold a power over my friend, and——'

She stopped me. 'Not one more word on the subject. You are mad to suppose this or that. Be wise: do not irritate and annoy a woman like me. It were better to please me than to preach to me.'

'Mrs. Falchion,' I said firmly, 'I wish to please

you,—so well that some day you will feel that I have been a good friend to you as well as to him——'

Again she interrupted me. 'You talk in foolish riddles. No good can come of this.'

'I can not believe that,' I urged; 'for when once your heart is moved by the love of a man, you will be just, and then the memory of another man who loved you and sinned for you——'

'Oh, you coward!' she broke out scornfully: 'you coward to persist in this!'

I made a little motion of apology with my hand, and was silent. I was satisfied. I felt that I had touched her as no words of mine had ever touched her before. If she became emotional, was vulnerable in her feelings, I knew that Roscoe's peace might be assured. That she loved Roscoe now I was quite certain. Through the mists I could see a way, even if I failed to find Madras and arrange another surprising situation. She was breathing hard with excitement.

Presently she said with incredible quietness: 'Do not force me to do hard things. I have a secret.'

'I have a secret too,' I answered. 'Let us compromise.'

'I do not fear your secret,' she answered. She thought I was referring to her husband's death.

'Well,' I replied, 'I honestly hope you never will. That would be a good day for you.'

'Let us go,' she said; then, presently: 'No, let us sit here and forget that we have been talking.'

I was satisfied. We sat down. She watched the scene silently, and I watched her. I felt that it would be my lot to see stranger things happen to her than I had seen before; but all in a different fashion. I had more hope for my friend, for Ruth Devlin, for——!

I then became silent even to myself. The weltering river, the fishers and their labour and their songs, the tall dark hills, the deep gloomy pastures, the flaring lights, were then in a dream before me; but I was thinking, planning.

As we sat there, we heard noises, not very harmonious, interrupting the song of the salmon-fishers. We got up to see. A score of river-drivers were marching down through the village, mocking the fishers and making wild mirth. The Indians took little notice, but the half-breeds and white fishers were restless.

'There will be trouble here one day,' said Mrs. Falchion.

A free fight which will clear the air,' I said.

I should like to see it—it would be picturesque

at least,' she added cheerfully; 'for I suppose no lives would be lost.'

'One cannot tell,' I answered; 'lives do not count so much in new lands.'

'Killing is hateful, but I like to see courage.'

And she did see it.

CHAPTER XVII.

RIDING THE REEFS.

THE next afternoon Roscoe was sitting on the coping deep in thought, when Ruth rode up with her father, dismounted, and came upon him so quietly that he did not hear her. I was standing in the trees a little distance away.

She spoke to him once, but he did not seem to hear. She touched his arm. He got to his feet.

'You were so engaged that you did not hear me,' she said.

'The noise of the rapids!' he answered after a strange pause, 'and your footstep is very light.'

She leaned her chin on her hand, rested against the rail of the coping, looked meditatively into the torrent below, and replied: 'Is it so light?' Then, after a pause, 'You have not asked me how I came, who came with me, or why I am here.'

'It was first necessary for me to conceive the

delightful fact that you are here,' he said in a dazed, and, therefore, not convincing tone.

She looked him full in the eyes. 'Please do not pay me the ill compliment of a compliment,' she said. 'Was it the sailor who spoke then or the—or yourself? It is not like you.'

'I did not mean it as a compliment,' he replied. 'I was thinking about critical and important things.'

'"Critical and important" sounds large,' she returned.

'And the awakening was sudden,' he continued. 'You must make allowance, please, for——'

'For the brusque appearance of a very unimaginative, substantial, and undreamlike person? I do. And now, since you will not put me quite at my ease by assuming, in words, that I have been properly "chaperoned" here, I must inform you that my father waits hard by—is, as my riotous young brother says, "without on the mat."'

'I am very glad,' he replied with more politeness than exactness.

'That I was duly escorted, or that my father is "without on the mat"? . . . However, you do not appear glad one way or the other. And now I must explain our business. It is to ask your company at dinner (do consider yourself honoured

—actually a formal dinner party in the Rockies!) to meet the lieutenant-governor, who is coming to see our famous Viking and Sunburst. . . . But you are expected to go out where my father feeds his —there, see,—his horse on your "trim parterre." And now that I have done my duty as page and messenger without a word of assistance, Mr. Roscoe, will you go and encourage my father to hope that you will be *vis-a-vis* to his excellency?' She lightly beat the air with her whip, while I took a good look at the charming scene.

Roscoe looked seriously at the girl for an instant. He understood too well the source of such gay social banter. He knew it covered a hurt. He said to her: 'Is this Ruth Devlin or another?'

And she replied very gravely: 'It is Ruth Devlin and another too,' and she looked down to the chasm beneath with a peculiar smile; and her eyes were troubled.

He left her, and went and spoke to her father whom I had joined, but, after a moment, returned to Ruth.

Ruth turned slightly to meet him as he came. 'And is the prestige of the house of Devlin to be supported?' she said; 'and the governor to be entertained with tales of flood and field?'

His face had now settled into a peculiar

calmness. He said with a touch of mock irony: 'The sailor shall play his part — the obedient retainer of the house of Devlin.'

'Oh,' she said, 'you are malicious now! You turn your long accomplished satire on a woman.' And she nodded to the hills opposite, as if to tell them that it was as they had said to her: those grand old hills with which she had lived since childhood, to whom she had told all that had ever happened to her.

'No, indeed no,' he replied, 'though I am properly rebuked. I fear I am malicious,—just a little, but it is all inner-self-malice: "Rome turned upon itself."'

'But one cannot always tell when irony is intended for the speaker of it. Yours did not seem applied to yourself,' was her slow answer, and she seemed more interested in Mount Trinity than in him.

'No?' Then he said with a playful sadness: 'A moment ago you were not completely innocent of irony, were you?'

'But a man is big and broad, and should not—he should be magnanimous, leaving it to woman, whose life is spent among little things, to be guilty of littlenesses. But see how daring I am—speaking like this to you who know so much more than I

do. . . . Surely, you are still only humorous, when you speak of irony turned upon yourself —the irony so icy to your friends?'

She had developed greatly. Her mind had been sharpened by pain. The edge of her wit had become poignant, her speech rendered logical and allusive. Roscoe was wise enough to understand that the change in her had been achieved by the change in himself; that since Mrs. Falchion came, Ruth had awakened sharply to a distress not exactly definable. She felt that though he had never spoken of love to her, she had a right to share his troubles. The infrequency of his visits to her of late, and something in his manner, made her uneasy and a little bitter. For there was an understanding between them, though it had been unspoken and unwritten. They had vowed without priest or witness. The heart speaks eloquently in symbols first, and afterwards in stumbling words.

It seemed to Roscoe at this moment, as it had seemed for some time, that the words would never be spoken. And was this all that had troubled her — the belief that Mrs. Falchion had some claim upon his life? Or had she knowledge, got in some strange way, of that wretched shadow in his past?

This possibility filled him with bitterness. The

old Adam in him awoke, and he said within himself,—'God in heaven, must one folly, one sin, kill me and her too? Why me more than another! . . . And I love her, I love her!'

His eyes flamed until their blue looked all black, and his brows grew straight over them sharply, making his face almost stern. . . . There came swift visions of renouncing his present life; of going with her—anywhere: to tell her all, beg her forgiveness, and begin life over again, admitting that this attempt at expiation was a mistake; to have his conscience clear of secret, and trust her kindness. For now he was sure that Mrs. Falchion meant to make his position as a clergyman impossible; to revenge herself on him for no wrong that, as far as he knew, he ever did directly to her.

But to tell this girl, or even her father or mother, *that he had been married, after a shameful, unsanctified fashion, to a savage*, with what came after, and the awful thing that happened—he who ministered at the altar! Now that he looked the thing in the face it shocked him. No, he could not do it.

She said to him, while he looked at her as though he would read her through and through, though his mind was occupied with a dreadful possibility beyond her,—'Why do you look so? You are

stern. You are critical. Have I — disimproved so?'

The words were full of a sudden and natural womanly fear, that something in herself had fallen in value. They had a pathos so much the more moving because she sought to hide it.

There swam before his eyes the picture of happiness from which she herself had roused him when she came. He involuntarily, passionately, caught her hand and pressed it to his lips twice; but spoke nothing.

'Oh! oh!' she said; — 'please!' Her voice was low and broken, and she spoke appealingly. Could he not see that he was breaking her heart, while filling it also with unbearable joy? Why did he not speak and make this possible, and not leave it a thing to flush her cheeks, and cause her to feel he had acted on a knowledge he had no right to possess till he had declared himself in speech? Could he not have spared her that? — This Christian gentleman, whose worth had compassed these mountains and won the dwellers among them? — it was bitter. Her pride and injured heart rose up and choked her.

He let go her hand. Now his face was partly turned from her, and she saw how thin and pale it was. She saw, too, what I had seen during the

past week, that his hair had become almost white about the temples; and the moveless sadness of his position struck her with unnatural force, so that, in spite of herself, tears came suddenly to her eyes, and a slight moan broke from her. She would have run away; but it was too late.

He saw the tears, the look of pity, indignation, pride, and love in her face.

'My love!' he cried passionately. He opened his arms to her.

But she stood still. He came very close to her, spoke quickly, and almost despairingly: 'Ruth, I love you, and I have wronged you; but here is your place, if you will come.'

At first she seemed stunned, and her face was turned to her mountains, as though the echo of his words were coming back to her from them, but the thing crept into her heart and flooded it. She seemed to wake, and then all her affection carried her into his arms, and she dried her eyes upon his breast.

After a time he whispered: 'My dear, I have wronged you. I should not have made you care for me.'

She did not seem to notice that he spoke of wrong. She said: 'I was yours, Galt, even from

the beginning, I think, though I did not quite know it. I remember what you read in church the first Sunday you came, and it has always helped me; for I wanted to be good.'

She paused and raised her eyes to his, and then with sweet solemnity she said: 'The words were:—

'"*The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon mine high places.*"'

'Ruth,' he answered, 'you have always walked on the high places. You have never failed. And you are as safe as the nest of the eagle, a noble work of God.'

'No, I am not noble; but I should like to be so. Most women like goodness. It is instinct with us, I suppose. We had rather be good than evil, and when we love we can do good things; but we quiver like the compass-needle between two poles. Oh, believe me! we are weak; but we are loving.'

'Your worst, Ruth, is as much higher than my best as the heaven is——'

'Galt, you hurt my fingers!' she interrupted.

He had not noticed the almost fierce strength of his clasp. But his life was desperately hungry for her.

'Forgive me, dear.—As I said, better than my best; for, Ruth, my life was—wicked, long ago. You cannot understand how wicked!'

'You are a clergyman and a good man,' she said, with pathetic negation.

'You give me a heart unsoiled, unspotted of the world. I have been in some ways worse than the worst men in the valley there below.'

'Galt, Galt,' she said, 'you shock me!'

'Why did I speak? Why did I kiss your hand as I did? Because at the moment it was the only honest thing to do; because it was due you that I should say,—"Ruth, I love you, love you so much"'—here she nestled close to him—'"so well, that everything else in life is as nothing beside it,—nothing! so well that I could not let you share my wretchedness."'

She ran her hand along his breast and looked up at him with swimming eyes.

'And you think, Galt, that this is fair to me? that a woman gives the heart for pleasant weather only? I do not know what your sorrow may be, but it is my right to share it. I am only a woman; but a woman can be strong for those she loves. Remember that I have always had to care for others—always; and I can bear much. I will not ask what your trouble is, I only ask you'—here she

spoke slowly and earnestly, and rested her hand on his shoulder—'to say to me that you love no other woman; and that—that no other woman has a claim upon you. Then I shall be content to pity you, to help you, to love you. God gives women many pains, but none so great as the love that will not trust utterly; for trust is our bread of life. Yes, indeed, indeed!'

'I dare not say,' he said, 'that it is your misfortune to love me, for in this you show how noble a woman can be. But I will say that the cup is bitter-sweet for you. . . . I cannot tell you now what my trouble is; but I can say that no other living woman has a claim upon me. . . . My reckoning is with the dead.'

'That is with God,' she whispered, 'and He is just and merciful too. . . . Can it not be repaired here?' She smoothed back his hair, then let her fingers stray lightly on his cheek.

It hurt him like death to reply: 'No, but there can be—punishment here.'

She shuddered slightly. 'Punishment, punishment!' she repeated fearfully,—'what punishment?'

'I do not quite know.' Lines of pain grew deeper in his face. . . . 'Ruth, how much can a woman forgive?'

'A mother, everything.' But she would say no more.

He looked at her long and earnestly, and said at last:

'Will you believe in me no matter what happens?'

'Always, always. Her smile was most winning.

'If things should appear dark against me?'

'Yes, if you give me your word.'

'If I said to you that I did a wrong; that I broke the law of God, though not the laws of man?'

There was a pause in which she drew back, trembling slightly, and looked at him timidly and then steadily, but immediately put her hands bravely in his, and said: 'Yes.'

'I did not break the laws of man.'

'It was when you were in the navy?' she inquired, in an awe-stricken tone.

'Yes, years ago.'

'I know. I feel it. You must not tell me. It was a woman, and this other woman, this Mrs. Falchion knows, and she would try to ruin you, or'—here she seemed to be moved suddenly by a new thought—'or have you love her. But she shall not, she shall not—neither! For I will love you, and God will listen to me, and answer me.'

'Would to God I were worthy of you! I dare not think of where you might be called to follow me, Ruth.'

'"*Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God,*"' she rejoined in a low voice.

'"Thy God my God!"' he repeated after her slowly.

He suddenly wondered if his God was her God; whether now, in his trouble, he had that comfort which his creed and profession should give him. For the first time he felt acutely that his choice of this new life might have been more a reaction from the past, a desire for expiation, than radical belief that this was the right and only thing for him to do. And when, some time after, he bade Ruth good-bye, as she went with her father, it came to him with appalling conviction that his life had been a mistake. The twist of a great wrong in a man's character distorts his vision; and if he has a tender conscience, he magnifies his misdeeds.

In silence Roscoe and I watched the two ride down the slope. I guessed what had happened: afterwards I was told all. I was glad of it, though the end was not yet promising. When we turned to go towards the house again, a man lounged out

of the trees towards us. He looked at me, then at Roscoe, and said:

'I'm Phil Boldrick's pal from Danger Mountain.'

Roscoe held out his hand, and the man took it, saying: 'You're The Padre, I suppose, and Phil was soft on you. Didn't turn religious, did he? He always had a streak of God A'mighty in him; a kind of give-away-the-top-of-your-head chap; friend o' the widow and the orphan, and divvy to his last crust with a pal. I got your letter, and come over here straight to see that he's been tombed accordin' to his virtues; to lay out the dollars he left me, on the people he had on his visitin' list; no loafers, no gophers, not one; but to them that stayed by him I stay, while prog and liquor last.'

I saw Roscoe looking at him in an abstracted way, and, as he did not reply, I said: 'Phil had many friends and no enemies.' Then I told him the tale of his death and funeral, and how the valley mourned for him.

While I spoke he stood leaning against a tree, shaking his head and listening, his eyes occasionally resting on Roscoe with a look as abstracted and puzzled as that on Roscoe's face. When I had finished he drew his hand slowly down his beard, and a thick sound came from behind his fingers. But he did not speak.

Then I suggested quietly that Phil's dollars could be put to a better use than for prog and liquor.

He did not reply to this at all; but after a moment's pause, in which he seemed to be studying the gambols of a squirrel in a pine tree, he rubbed his chin nervously, and more in soliloquy than conversation said: 'I never had but two pals that was pals through and through. And one was Phil and the other was Jo—Jo Brackenbury.'

Here Roscoe's hand, which had been picking at the bark of a poplar, twitched suddenly.

The man continued: 'Poor Jo went down in the *Fly Away* when she swung with her bare ribs flat before the wind, and swamped and tore upon the bloody reefs at Apia. . . . God, how they gnawed her! And never a rag holdin' nor a stick standin', and her pretty figger broke like a tin whistle in a Corliss engine.—And Jo Brackenbury, the dandiest rip, the noisest pal that ever said "Here's how!" went out to heaven on a tearing sea.'

'Jo Brackenbury—' Roscoe repeated musingly. His head was turned away from us.

'Yes, Jo Brackenbury: and, Captain Falchion said to me' (I wonder that I did not start then) 'when I told him how the *Fly Away* went down

to Davy, and her lovers went aloft, reefed close afore the wind,—"Then," says he, "they've got a damned sound seaman on the Jordan, and so help me! him that's good enough to row my girl from open sea, gales poundin' and breakers showin' teeth across the bar to Maita Point, is good enough for use where seas is still and reefs ain't fashionable."'

Roscoe's face looked haggard as it now turned towards us. 'If you will meet me,' he said to the stranger, 'to-morrow morning, in Mr. Devlin's office at Viking, I will hand you over Phil Boldrick's legacy.'

The man made as if he would shake hands with Roscoe, who appeared not to notice the motion, and then said: 'I'll be there. You can bank on that; and, as we used to say down in the Spicy Isles, where neither of you have been, I s'pose, *Talofa!*'

He swung away down the hillside.

Roscoe turned to me. 'You see, Marmion, all things circle to a centre. The trail seems long, but the fox gets killed an arm's length from his hole.'

'Not always. You take it too seriously,' I said. 'You are no fox.'

'That man will be in at the death,' he persisted.

'Nonsense, Roscoe. He does not know you. What has he to do with you? This is overwrought nerves. You are killing yourself with worry.'

He was motionless and silent for a minute. Then he said very quietly: 'No, I do not think that I really worry now. I have known'—here he laid his hand upon my shoulder and his eyes had a shining look—'what it is to be happy, unspeakably happy, for a moment; and that stays with me. I am a coward no longer.'

He drew his finger tips slowly across his forehead. Then he continued: 'To-morrow I shall be angry with myself, no doubt, for having that moment's joy, but I cannot feel so now. I shall probably condemn myself for cruel selfishness; but I have touched life's highest point this afternoon, Marmion.'

I drew his hand down from my shoulder and pressed it. It was cold. He withdrew his eyes from the mountain, and said: 'I have had dreams, Marmion, and they are over. I lived in one: to expiate—to wipe out—a past, by spending my life for others. The expiation is not enough. I lived in another: to win a woman's love; and I have, and was caught up by it for a moment, and it was wonderful. But it is over now, quite over. . . .

And now for her sake renunciation must be made, before I have another dream — a long one, Marmion.'

I had forebodings, but I pulled myself together and said firmly: 'Roscoe, these are fancies. Stop it, man. You are moody. Come, let us walk, and talk of other things.'

'No, we will not walk,' he said, 'but let us sit there on the coping, and be quiet—quiet in that roar between the hills.' Suddenly he swung round, caught me by the shoulders and held me gently so.

'I have a pain at my heart, Marmion, as if I'd heard my death sentence; such as a soldier feels who knows that Death looks out at him from iron eyes. You smile: I suppose you think I am mad.'

I saw that it was best to let him speak his mind. So I answered: 'Not mad, my friend. Say on what you like. Tell me all you feel. Only, for God's sake be brave, and don't give up until there's occasion. I am sure you exaggerate your danger, whatever it is.'

'Listen for a minute,' said he: 'I had a brother Edward, as good a lad as ever was; a boisterous, healthy fellow. We had an old nurse in our family who came from Irish hills, faithful and kind to us both. There came a change over Edward. He appeared not to take the same interest in his

sports. One day he came to me, looking a bit pale, and said: "Galt, I think I should like to study for the Church." I laughed at it, yet it troubled me in a way, for I saw he was not well. I told Martha, the nurse. She shook her head sadly, and said: "Edward is not for the Church, but you, my lad. He is for heaven."'

'"For heaven, Martha?" laughed I.

'"In truth for heaven," she replied, "and that soon. The look of his eye is doom. I've seen it since I swaddled him, and he will go suddenly."

'I was angry, and I said to her,—though she thought she spoke the truth,—"This is only Irish croaking. We'll have the banshee next."

'She got up from her chair and answered me solemnly,—"Galt Roscoe, I *have* heard the banshee wail, and sorrow falls upon your home. And don't you be so hard with me that have loved you, and who suffers for the lad that often and often lay upon my breast. Don't be so hard; for your day of trouble comes too. You, not he, will be priest at the altar. Death will come to him like a swift and easy sleep; but you will feel its hand upon your heart and know its hate for many a day, and bear the slow pangs of it until your life is all crushed, and you go from the world alone, Love crying after you and not able to save you, not even

the love of woman—weaker than death. . . . And, in my grave, when that day comes beside a great mountain in a strange land, I will weep and pray for you; for I was mother to you too, when yours left you alone bewhiles, never, in this world, to come back."

'And, Marmion, that night towards morning, as I lay in the same room with Edward, I heard his breath stop sharply. I jumped up and drew aside the curtains to let in the light, and then I knew that the old woman spoke true. . . . And now! . . . Well, I am like Hamlet,—and I can say with him, "But thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart—but it is no matter!" . . .'

I tried to laugh and talk away his brooding, but there was little use, his convictions were so strong. Besides, what can you do with a morbidness which has its origin in fateful circumstances?

I devoutly wished that a telegram would come from Winnipeg to let me know if Boyd Madras, under his new name, could be found. I was a hunter on a faint trail.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE STRINGS OF DESTINY.

WHEN Phil's pal left us he went wandering down the hillside, talking to himself. Long afterwards he told me how he felt, and I reproduce his phrases as nearly as I can.

'Knocked 'em, I guess,' he said, 'with that about Jo Brackenbury. . . . Poor Jo! Stuck together, him and me did, after she got the steel in her heart.' . . . He pulled himself together, shuddering. . . . 'Went back on me, she did, and took up with a cursed swell, and got it cold—cold. And I? By Judas! I never was shut of that. I've known women, many of 'em, all countries, but she was different! I expect now, after all these years, that if I got my hand on the devil that done for her, I'd rattle his breath in his throat. There's things that clings. She clings, Jo Brackenbury clings, and Phil Boldrick clings; and they're gone, and I'm left to go it alone. To play the single hand—what!—by Jiminy!'

He exclaimed thus on seeing two women approach from the direction of the valley. He stood still, mouth open, staring. They drew near, almost passed him. But one of them, struck by his intense gaze, suddenly turned and came towards him.

'Miss Falchion! Miss Falchion!' he cried. Then, when she hesitated as if with an effort of memory, he added,—'Don't you know me?'

'Ah!' she replied abruptly, 'Sam Kilby! Are you Sam Kilby, Jo Brackenbury's friend, from Samoa?'

'Yes, miss, I'm Jo Brackenbury's friend; and I've rowed you across the reefs with him more than once—I guess so! But it's a long way from Apia to the Rockies, and it's funny to meet here.'

'When did you come here? and from where?

'I come to-day from the Hudson's Bay post at Danger Mountain. I'm Phil Boldrick's pal.'

'Ah,' she said again, with a look in her eyes not pleasant to see,—'and what brings you up here in the hills?' Hers was more than an ordinary curiosity.

'I come to see The Padre who was with Phil —when he left. And The Padre's a fair square sort, as I reckon him, but melancholy, almighty melancholy.'

'Yes, melancholy, I suppose,' she said, 'and fair square, as you say. And what did you say and do?'

'Why, we yarned about Phil, and where I'd get the legacy to-morrow; and I s'pose I had a strong breeze on the quarter, for I talked as free as if we'd grubbed out of the same dough-pan since we was kiddies.'

'Yes?'

'Yes siree; I don't know how it was, but I got to reelin' off about Jo—queer, wasn't it? And I told 'em how he went down in the *Fly Away*, and how the lovely ladies—you remember how we used to call the white-caps lovely ladies—fondled him out to sea and on to heaven.'

'And what did—The Padre—think of that?'

'Well, he's got a heart, I should say,—and that's why Phil cottoned to him, maybe,—for he looked as if he'd seen ghosts. I guess he'd never had a craft runnin' 'tween a sand-bar and a ragged coral bank; nor seen a girl like the *Fly Away* take a buster in her teeth; nor a man-of-war come bundlin' down upon a nasty glacis, the captain on the bridge, engines goin' for all they're worth, every man below battened in, and every Jack above watchin' the fight between the engines and the hurricane. . . . Here she rolls six fathoms from the glacis that'll

rip her copper garments off, and the quiverin' engines pull her back; and she swings and struggles and trembles between hell in the hurricane and God A'mighty in the engines; till at last she gets her nose at the neck of the open sea, and crawls out safe and sound. . . . I guess he'd have more marble in his cheeks, if he saw likes o' that, Miss Falchion?'

Kilby paused and wiped his forehead.

She had listened calmly. She did not answer his question. She said: 'Kilby, I am staying at the summer hotel up there. Will you call on me—let me see . . . say, to-morrow afternoon?—Some one will tell you the way, if you do not know it. . . . Ask for *Mrs.* Falchion, Kilby, not *Miss* Falchion. . . . You will come?'

'Why, yes,' he replied, 'you can count on me; for I'd like to hear of things that happened after I left Apia—and how it is that you are *Mrs.* Falchion,—for that's mighty queer.'

'You shall hear all that and more.' She held out her hand to him and smiled. He took it, and she knew that now she was gathering up the strings of destiny.

They parted.

The two passed on, looking, in their cool elegance, as if life were the most pleasant thing; as though

the very perfume of their garments would preserve them from that plague called trouble.

'Justine,' said Mrs. Falchion, 'there is one law stranger than all; the law of coincidence. Perhaps the convenience of modern travel assists it, but fate is in it also. Events run in circles. People connected with them travel that way also. We pass and re-pass each other many times, but on different paths, until we come close and see each other face to face.'

She was speaking almost the very words which Roscoe had spoken to me. But perhaps there was nothing strange in that.

'Yes, madame,' replied Justine; 'it is so, but there is a law greater than coincidence.'

'What, Justine?'

'The law of love, which is just and merciful, and would give peace instead of trouble.'

Mrs. Falchion looked closely at Justine, and, after a moment, evidently satisfied, said: 'What do you know of love?'

Justine tried hard for composure, and answered gently: 'I loved my brother Hector.'

'And did it make you just and merciful and—an angel?'

'Madame, you could answer that better. But it has not made me be at war; it has made me patient.'

'Your love—for your brother—has made you that?' Again she looked keenly, but Justine now showed nothing but earnestness.

'Yes, madame.'

Mrs. Falchion paused for a moment, and seemed intent on the beauty of the pine-belted hills, capped by snowy peaks, and wrapped in a most hearty yet delicate colour. The red of her parasol threw a warm softness upon her face. She spoke now without looking at Justine.

'Justine, did you ever love any one besides your brother?—I mean another man.'

Justine was silent for a moment, and then she said: 'Yes, once.' She was looking at the hills now, and Mrs. Falchion at her.

'And you were happy?' Here Mrs. Falchion abstractedly toyed with a piece of lace on Justine's arm. Such acts were unusual with her.

'I was happy—in loving.'

'Why did you not marry?'

'Madame,—it was impossible—quite!' This, with hesitation and the slightest accent of pain.

'Why impossible? You have good looks, you were born a lady; you have a foolish heart—the fond are foolish.' She watched the girl keenly, the hand ceased to toy with the lace, and caught the arm itself,—'Why impossible?'

'Madame, he did not love me, he never could.'

'Did he know of your love?'

'Oh no, no!' This, with trouble in her voice.

'And you have never forgotten?'

The catechism was merciless; but Mrs. Falchion was not merely malicious. She was inquiring of a thing infinitely important to her. She was searching the heart of another, not only because she was suspicious, but because she wanted to know herself better.

'It is easy to remember.'

'Is it long since you saw him?'

The question almost carried terror with it, for she was not quite sure why Mrs. Falchion questioned her.

She lifted her eyes slowly, and there was in them anxiety and joy. 'It seems,' she said, 'like years.'

'He loves some one else, perhaps?'

'Yes, I think so, madame.'

'Did you hate her?'

'Oh no; I am glad for him.'

Here Mrs. Falchion spoke sharply, almost bitterly. Even through her soft colour a hardness appeared.

'You are glad for him? You would see another woman in his arms and not be full of anger?'

'Quite.'

'Justine, you are a fool.'

'Madame, there is no commandment against being a fool.'

'Oh, you make me angry with your meekness!'

Here Mrs. Falchion caught a twig from a tree by her, snapped it in her fingers, and petulantly threw its pieces to the ground. 'Suppose that the man had once loved you, and afterwards loved another,—then again another?'

'Madame, that would be my great misfortune, but it might be no wrong in him.'

'How not a wrong in him?'

'It may have been my fault. There must be love in both—great love, for it to last.'

'And if the woman loved him not at all?'

'Where, then, could be the wrong in him?'

'And if he went from you,'—here her voice grew dry and her words were sharp,—'and took a woman from the depths of—oh, no matter what! and made her commit—crime—and was himself a criminal?'

'It is horrible to think of; but I should ask myself how much I was to blame. . . . What would you ask yourself, madame?'

'You have a strain of the angel in you, Justine. You would forgive Judas if he said, "*Peccavi.*" I

have a strain of Satan,—it was born in me.—I would say, You have sinned, now suffer.'

'God give you a softer heart,' said Justine, with tender boldness and sincerity.

At this Mrs. Falchion started slightly, and trouble covered her face. She assumed, however, a tone almost brusque, artificially airy and unimportant.

'There, that will do, thank you. . . . We have become serious and incomprehensible. Let us talk of other things. I want to be gay. . . . Amuse me.'

Arrived at the hotel, she told Justine that she must not be disturbed till near dinner-time, and withdrew to her sitting-room. There she sat and thought, as she had never done in her life before. She thought upon everything that had happened since the day when she met Galt Roscoe on the *Fulvia;* of a certain evening in England, before he took orders, when he told her, in retort to some peculiarly cutting remark of hers, that she was the evil genius of his life: that evening when her heart grew hard, as she had once said it should always be to him, and she determined again, after faltering many times, that just such a genius she would be; of the strange meeting in the rapids at the Devil's Slide, and the irony of it; and the fact that he had

saved her life—on that she paused a while; of Ruth Devlin—and here she was swayed by conflicting emotions; of the scene at the mill, and Phil Boldrick's death and funeral; of the service in the church where she meant to mock him, and, instead, mocked herself; of the meeting with Tonga Sam; of all that Justine had said to her: then again of the far past in Samoa, with which Galt Roscoe was associated, and of that first vow of vengeance for a thing he had done; and how she had hesitated to fulfil it year after year till now.

Passing herself slowly back and forth before her eyes, she saw that she had lived her life almost wholly alone; that no woman had ever cherished her as a friend, and that on no man's breast had she ever laid her head in trust and love. She had been loved, but it had never brought her satisfaction. From Justine there was devotion; but it had, as she thought, been purchased, paid for, like the labour of a ploughboy. And if she saw now in Justine's eyes a look of friendship, a note of personal allegiance, she knew it was because she herself had grown more human.

Her nature had been stirred. Her natural heart was struggling against her old bitterness towards Galt Roscoe and her partial hate of Ruth Devlin. Once Roscoe had loved her, and she had not loved

him. Then, on a bitter day for him, he did a mad thing. The thing became — though neither of them knew it at the time, and he not yet—a great injury to her, and this had called for the sharp retaliation which she had the power to use. But all had not happened as she expected; for something called Love had been conceived in her very slowly, and was now being born, and sent, trembling for its timid life, into the world.

She closed her eyes with weariness, and pressed her hands to her temples.

She wondered why she could not be all evil or all good. She spoke and acted against Ruth Devlin, and yet she pitied her. She had the nettle to sting Roscoe to death, and yet she hesitated to use it. She had said to herself that she would wait till the happiest moment of his life, and then do so. Well, his happiest moment had come. Ruth Devlin's heart was all out, all blossomed—beside Mrs. Falchion's like some wild flower to the aloe. . . . Only now she had come to know that she had a heart. Something had chilled her at her birth, and when her mother died, a stranger's kiss closed up all the ways to love, and left her an icicle. She was twenty-eight years old, and yet she had never kissed a face in joy or to give joy. And now, when she had come to know

herself, and understand what others understand when they are little children in their mother's arms, she had to bow to the spirit that denies. She drew herself up with a quiver of the body.

'O God!' she said, 'do I hate him or love him!'

Her head dropped in her hands. She sat regardless of time, now scarcely stirring, desperately quiet. The door opened softly and Justine entered. 'Madame,' she said, 'pardon me; I am so sorry, but Miss Devlin has come to see you, and I thought——'

'You thought, Justine, that I would see her.' There was unmistakable irony in her voice. 'Very well. . . . Show her in.'

She rose, stretched out her arms as if to free herself of a burden, smoothed her hair, composed herself, and waited, the afternoon sun just falling across her burnished shoes, giving her feet of gold. She chanced to look down at them. A strange thought came to her: words that she had heard Roscoe read in church. The thing was almost grotesque in its association. '*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who bringeth glad tidings, who publisheth peace!*'

Ruth Devlin entered, saying, 'I have come, Mrs. Falchion, to ask you if you will dine with us next Monday evening?'

Then she explained the occasion of the dinner party, and said: 'You see, though it is formal, I am asking our guests informally;' and she added as neutrally and as lightly as she could,—'Mr. Roscoe and Dr. Marmion have been good enough to say that they will come. Of course, a dinner party as it should be is quite impossible to us simple folk, but when a lieutenant-governor commands, we must do the best we can—with the help of our friends.'

Mrs. Falchion was delighted, she said, and then they talked of trivial matters, Ruth smoothing out the folds of her riding-dress with her whip more earnestly, in preoccupation, than the act called for. At last she said, in the course of the formal talk,—'You have travelled much?'

'Yes, that has been my lot,' was the reply; and she leaned back in the gold-trimmed cane chair, her feet still in the belt of sunlight.

'I have often wished that I might travel over the ocean,' said Ruth, 'but here I remain,—what shall I say?—a rustic in a bandbox, seeing the world through a pin-hole.—That is the way my father puts it. Except, of course, that I think it very inspiring to live out here among wonderful mountains, which, as Mr. Roscoe says, are the most aristocratic of companions.'

Some one in the next room was playing the piano idly yet expressively. The notes of *Il Trovatore* kept up a continuous accompaniment to their talk, varying, as if by design, with its meaning and importance, and yet in singular contrast at times to their thoughts and words. It was almost sardonic in its monotonous persistence.

'Travel is not all, believe me, Miss Devlin,' was the indolent reply. 'Perhaps the simpler life is the happier. The bandbox is not the worst that may come to one—when one is born to it. I am not sure but it is the best. I doubt that when one has had the fever of travel and the world, the bandbox is permanently habitable again.'

Mrs. Falchion was keen; she had found her opportunity.

On the result of this duel, if Ruth Devlin but knows it, depends her own and another's happiness. It is not improbable, however, that something of this is in her mind. She shifts her chair so that her face may not be so much in the light. But the belt of sunlight is broadening from Mrs. Falchion's feet to her dress.

'You think not?' Ruth said slowly.

The reply was not important in tone. Mrs. Falchion had picked up a paper knife and was bending it to and fro between her fingers.

'I think not. Particularly with a man, who is, we will say, by nature, adventurous and explorative. I think, if, in some mad moment, I determined to write a novel, it should be of such a man. He flies wide and far; he sees all; he feeds on novelty; he passes from experience to experience,—liberal pleasures of mind and sense all the way. Well, he tires of Egypt and its flesh-pots. He has seen as he hurried on,—I hope I am not growing too picturesque?—too much of women, too many men. He has been unwise,—most men are. Perhaps he has been more than unwise; he has made a great mistake, a social mistake—or crime—less or more. If it is a small one, the remedy is not so difficult. Money, friends, adroitness, absence, long retirement, are enough. If a great one, and he is sensitive—and sated—he flies, he seeks seclusion. He is afflicted with remorse. He is open to the convincing pleasures of the simple and unadorned life; he is satisfied with simple people. The snuff of the burnt candle of enjoyment he calls regret, repentance. He gives himself the delights of introspection, and wishes he were a child again —yes, indeed it is so, dear Miss Devlin.'

Ruth sat regarding her, her deep eyes glowing. Mrs. Falchion continued: 'In short, he finds the bandbox, as you call it, suited to his renunciations.

Its simplicities, which he thinks is regeneration, are only new sensations. But — you have often noticed the signification of a "but," ' she added, smiling, tapping her cheek lightly with the ivory knife, — 'but the hour arrives when the bandbox becomes a prison, when the simple hours cloy Then the ordinary incident is merely *gauche*, and expiation a bore.

'I see by your face that you understand quite what I mean. . . . Well, these things occasionally happen. The great mistake follows the man, and, by a greater misery, breaks the misery of the bandbox; or the man himself, hating his captivity, becomes reckless, does some mad thing, and has a miserable end. Or again, some one who holds the key to his mistake comes in from the world he has left, and considers—considers, you understand!—whether to leave him to work out his servitude, or, mercifully—if he is not altogether blind—permit him the means of escape to his old world, to the life to which he was born,—away from the bandbox and all therein. . . . I hope I have not tired you—I am sure I have.'

Ruth saw the full meaning of Mrs. Falchion's words. She realised that her happiness, his happiness — everything — was at stake. All Mrs. Falchion's old self was battling with her new self

She had determined to abide by the result of this meeting. She had spoken in a half gay tone, but her words were not everything; the woman herself was there, speaking in every feature and glance. Ruth had listened with an occasional change of colour, but also with an outward pride to which she seemed suddenly to have grown. But her heart was sick and miserable. How could it be otherwise, reading, as she did, the tale just told her in a kind of allegory, in all its warning, nakedness, and vengeance? But she detected, too, an occasional painful movement of Mrs. Falchion's lips, a kind of trouble in the face. She noticed it at first vaguely as she listened to the music in the other room; but at length she interpreted it aright, and she did not despair. She did not then follow her first impulse to show that she saw the real meaning of that speech, and rise and say, 'You are insulting,' and bid her good-day.

After all, where was the ground for the charge of insult? The words had been spoken impersonally. So, after a moment, she said, as she drew a glove from a hand slightly trembling: 'And you honestly think it is the case: that one having lived such a life as you describe so unusually, would never be satisfied with a simple life?'

'My dear, never;—not such a man as I describe. I know the world.'

'But suppose not quite such an one; suppose one that had not been so—intense; so much the social gladiator; who had business of life as well,' —here the girl grew pale, for this was a kind of talk unfamiliar and painful to her, but to be endured for her cause,—'as well as "the flesh-pots of Egypt;" who had made no wicked mistakes—would he necessarily end as you say?'

'I am speaking of the kind of man who had made such mistakes, and he would end as I say. Few men, if any, would leave the world for—the bandbox, shall I still say? without having a Nemesis.'

'But the Nemesis need not, as you say yourself, be inevitable. The person who holds the key of his life, the impersonation of his mistake——'

'His *criminal* mistake,' Mrs. Falchion interrupted, her hand with the ivory knife now moveless in that belt of sunlight across her knees.

'His criminal mistake,' Ruth repeated, wincing, —'might not—it become changed into mercy, and the man be safe?'

'Safe? Perhaps. But he would tire of the pin-hole just the same. . . . My dear, you do not know life.'

'But, Mrs. Falchion,' said the girl, now very bravely, 'I know the crude elements of justice. That is one plain thing taught here in the mountains. We have swift reward and punishment—no hateful things called Nemesis. The meanest wretch here in the West, if he has a quarrel, avenges himself openly and at once. Actions are rough and ready, perhaps, but that is our simple way. Hate is manly—and womanly too—when it is open and brave. But when it haunts and shadows, it is not understood here.'

Mrs. Falchion sat during this speech, the fingers of one hand idly drumming the arm of her chair, as idly as when on board the *Fulvia* she listened to me telling that story of Anson and his wife. Outwardly her coolness was remarkable. But she was really admiring, and amazed at Ruth's adroitness and courage. She appreciated fully the skilful duel that had kept things on the surface, and had committed neither of them to anything personal. It was a battle—the tragical battle of a drawing-room.

When Ruth had ended, she said slowly: 'You speak very earnestly. You do your mountains justice; but each world has its code. It is good for some men to be followed by a slow hate—it all depends on themselves. There are some

who wish to meet their fate and its worst, and others who would forget it. The latter are in the most danger always.'

Ruth rose.

She stepped forward slightly, so that her feet also were within the sunlight. The other saw this; it appeared to interest her. Ruth looked—as such a girl can look—with incredible sincerity into Mrs. Falchion's eyes, and said: 'Oh, if I knew such a man, I would be sorry — sorry for him; and if I also knew that his was only a mistake and not a crime, or, if the crime itself had been repented of, and atonement made, I would beg some one—some one better than I—to pray for him. And I would go to the person who had his life and career at disposal, and would say to her, —if it were a woman,—Oh, remember that it is not he alone who would suffer! I would beg that woman—if it were a woman—to be merciful, as she one day must ask for mercy.'

The girl as she stood there, all pale, yet glowing with the white light of her pain, was beautiful, noble, compelling. Mrs. Falchion now rose also. She was altogether in the sunlight now. From the piano in the next room came a quick change of accompaniment, and a voice was heard singing, as if to the singer's self, *Il balen del suo sorris.* It is

hard to tell how far such little incidents affected her in what she did that afternoon ; but they had their influence. She said : 'You are altruistic—or are you selfish, or both? . . . And should the woman—if it were a woman—yield, and spare the man, what would you do?'

'I would say that she had been merciful and kind, and that one in this world would pray for her when she needed prayers most.'

'You mean when she was old,'—Mrs. Falchion shrank a little at the sound of her own words. Now her careless abandon was gone ; she seemed to be following her emotions. 'When she was old,' she continued, 'and came to die? It is horrible to grow old, except one has been a saint—and a mother. . . . And even then—have you ever seen them, the women of that Egypt of which we spoke?—powdered, smirking over their champagne, because they feel for an instant a false pulse of their past?—See how eloquent your mountains make me!—I think that would make one hard and cruel; and one would need the prayers of a churchful of good women, even as good—as you.'

She could not resist a touch of irony in the last words, and Ruth, who had been ready to take her hand impulsively, was stung. But she replied nothing; and the other, after waiting, added, with

a sudden and wonderful kindness,—'I say what is quite true. Women might dislike you,—many of them would,—though you could not understand why; but you are good, and that, I suppose, is the best thing in the world. Yes, you are good,' she said musingly, and then she leaned forward and quickly kissed the girl's cheek. 'Good-bye,' she said, and then she turned her head resolutely away.

They stood there both in the sunlight, both very quiet, but their hearts were throbbing with new sensations. Ruth knew that she had conquered, and, with her eyes all tearful, she looked steadily, yearningly at the woman before her; but she knew it was better she should say little now, and, with a motion of the hand in good-bye,—she could do no more,—she slowly went to the door. There she paused and looked back, but the other was still turned away.

For a minute Mrs. Falchion stood looking at the door through which the girl had passed, then she caught close the curtains of the window, and threw herself upon the sofa with a sobbing laugh.

'To her!' she cried, 'I played the game of mercy to her! And she has his love, the love which I rejected once, and which I want now—to my shame! A hateful and terrible love. I, who

ought to say to him, as I so long determined,—"You shall be destroyed. You killed my sister, poor Alo; if not with a knife yourself, you killed her heart, and that is just the same. I never knew until now what a heart is when killed.'

She caught her breast as though it hurt her, and, after a moment, continued: 'Do hearts always ache so when they love? I was the wife of a good man,—oh! he *was* a good man, who sinned for me.—I see it now!—and I let him die—die alone!' She shuddered violently. 'Oh, now I see, and I know what love such as his can be! I am punished — punished! for my love is impossible, horrible.'

There was a long silence, in which she sat looking at the floor, her face all grey with pain. At last the door of the room softly opened, and Justine entered.

'May I come in, madame?' she said.

'Yes, come, Justine.' The voice was subdued, and there was in it what drew the girl swiftly to the side of Mrs. Falchion. She spoke no word, but gently undid the other's hair, and smoothed and brushed it softly.

At last Mrs. Falchion said: 'Justine, on Monday we will leave here.'

The girl was surprised, but she replied without comment,—'Yes, madame; where do we go?'

There was a pause; then: 'I do not know. I want to go where I shall get rested. A village in Italy or——' she paused.

'Or France, madame?' Justine was eager.

Mrs. Falchion made a gesture of helplessness. 'Yes, France will do. . . . The way around the world is long, and I am tired.' Minutes passed, and then she slowly said: 'Justine, we will go to-morrow night.'

'Yes, madame, to-morrow night,—and not next Monday.'

There was a strange only half-veiled melancholy in Mrs. Falchion's next words: 'Do you think, Justine, that I could be happy anywhere?'

'I think anywhere—but here, madame.'

Mrs. Falchion rose to a sitting posture, and looked at the girl fixedly, almost fiercely. A crisis was at hand. The pity, gentleness, and honest solicitude of Justine's face conquered her, and her look changed to one of understanding and longing for companionship: sorrow swiftly welded their friendship.

Before Mrs. Falchion slept that night, she said again, — 'We will leave here to-morrow, dear, for ever.'

And Justine replied: 'Yes, madame, for ever.'

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SENTENCE.

THE next morning Roscoe was quiet and calm, but he looked ten years older than when I had first seen him. After breakfast he said to me: 'I have to go to the valley to pay Phil Boldrick's friend the money, and to see Mr. Devlin. I shall be back, perhaps, by lunch-time. Will you go with me, or stay here?'

'I shall try to get some fishing this morning, I fancy,' I said. 'And possibly I shall idle a good deal, for my time with you here is shortening, and I want to have a great store of laziness behind me for memory, when I've got my nose to the grindstone.'

He turned to the door, and said: 'Marmion, I wish you weren't going. I wish that we might be comrades under the same roof till——' He paused and smiled strangely.

'Till the finish,' I added, 'when we should amble

grey-headed, *sans* everything, out of the mad old world? I imagine Miss Belle Treherne would scarcely fancy that. . . . Still, we can be friends just the same. Our wives won't object to an occasional bout of loafing together, will they?'

I was determined not to take him too seriously.

He said nothing, and in a moment he was gone.

I passed the morning idly enough, yet thinking, too, very much about my friend. I was anxiously hoping that the telegram from Winnipeg would come. About noon it came. It was not known quite in what part of the North-west, Madras (under his new name) was, for the corps of mounted police had been changed about recently. My letter had, however, been forwarded into the wilds.

I saw no immediate way but to go to Mrs. Falchion and make a bold bid for his peace. I had promised Madras never to let her know that he was alive, but I would break the promise if Madras himself did not come. After considerable hesitation I started. It must be remembered that the events of the preceding chapter were only known to me afterwards.

Justine Caron was passing through the hall of the hotel when I arrived. After greetings, she said that Mrs. Falchion might see me, but that they were very busy; they were leaving in the evening

for the coast. Here was a pleasant revelation! I was so confused with delight at the information, that I could think of nothing more sensible to say than that the unexpected always happens. By this time we were within Mrs. Falchion's sitting-room. And to my remark, Justine replied: 'Yes, it is so. One has to reckon most with the accidents of life. The expected is either pleasant or unpleasant; there is no middle place.'

'You are growing philosophic,' said I playfully.

'Monsieur,' she said gravely, 'I hope as I live and travel, I grow a little wiser.' Still she lingered, her hand upon the door.

'I had thought that you were always wise.'

'Oh no, no! How can you say so? I have been very foolish sometimes.' . . . She came back towards me. 'If I am wiser I am also happier,' she added.

In that moment we understood each other; that is, I read how unselfish this girl could be, and she knew thoroughly the source of my anxiety, and was glad that she could remove it.

'I would not speak to any one save you,' she said, 'but do you not also think that it is good we go?'

'I have been thinking so, but I hesitated to say so,' was my reply.

'You need not hesitate,' she said earnestly. 'We have both understood, and I know that you are to be trusted.'

'Not always,' I said, remembering that one experience of mine with Mrs. Falchion on the *Fulvia.*

Holding the back of a chair, and looking earnestly at me, she continued: 'Once, on the vessel, you remember, in a hint so very little, I made it appear that madame was selfish. . . . I am sorry. Her heart was asleep. Now, it is awake. She is unselfish. The accident of our going away is hers. She goes to leave peace behind.'

'I am most glad,' said I. 'And you think there will be peace?'

'Surely, since this has come, that will come also.'

'And you—Justine Caron?' I should not have asked that question had I known more of the world. It was tactless and unkind.

'For me it is no matter at all. I do not come in anywhere. As I said, I am happy.'

And turning quickly, yet not so quickly but that I saw her cheeks were flushed, she passed out of the room.

In a moment Mrs. Falchion entered. There was something new in her carriage, in her person. She

came towards me, held out her hand, and said, with the same old half-quizzical tone: 'Have you, with your unerring instinct, guessed that I was leaving, and so come to say good-bye?'

'You credit me too highly. No, I came to see you because I had an inclination. I did not guess that you were going until Miss Caron told me.'

'An inclination to see me is not your usual instinct, is it? Was it some special impulse, based on a scientific calculation—at which, I suppose, you are an adept—or curiosity? Or had it a purpose? Or were you bored, and therefore sought the most startling experience you could conceive?' She deftly rearranged some flowers in a jar.

'I can plead innocence of all directly; I am guilty of all indirectly. — I was impelled to come. I reasoned—if that is scientific—on what I should say if I did come, knowing how inclined I was to——'

'To get beyond my depth,' she interrupted, and she motioned me to a chair.

'Well, let it be so,' said I.—'I was curious to know what kept you in this sylvan, and I fear, to you, half-barbaric spot. I was bored with myself; and I had some purpose in coming, or I should not have had the impulse.'

She was leaning back in her chair easily, not languidly. She seemed reposeful, yet alert.

'How wonderfully you talk!' she said, with good-natured mockery. 'You are scientifically frank. You were bored with yourself.—Then there is some hope for your future wife. . . . We have had many talks in our acquaintance, Dr. Marmion, but none so interesting as this promises to be. But now tell me what your purpose was in coming. "Purpose" seems portentous, but quite in keeping.'

I noticed here the familiar, almost imperceptible click of the small white teeth.

Was I so glad she was going that I was playful, elated? 'My purpose,' said I, 'has no point now; for even if I were to propose to amuse you—I believe that was the old formula—by an idle day somewhere, by an excursion, an——'

'An autobiography,' she broke in soothingly.

'Or an autobiography,' I repeated stolidly, 'you would not, I fancy, be prepared to accept my services. There would be no chance — now that you are going away — for me to play the harlequin——'

'Whose office you could do pleasantly if it suited you—these adaptable natures!

'Quite so. But it is all futile now, as I say.'

'Yes, you mentioned that before.—Well?'

'*It is well*,' I replied, dropping into a more meaning tone.

'You say it patriarchally, but yet flatteringly.' Here she casually offered me a flower. I mechanically placed it in my buttonhole. She seemed delighted at confusing me. But I kept on firmly.

'I do not think,' I rejoined gravely now, 'that there need be any flattery between us.'

'Why?—We are not married.'

'That is as radically true as it is epigrammatic,' blurted I.

'And truth is more than epigram?'

'One should delight in truth; I do delight in epigram; there seems little chance for choice here.'

It seemed to me that I had said quite what I wished there, but she only looked at me enigmatically.

She arranged a flower in her dress as she almost idly replied, though she did not look me full in the face as she had done before,—'Well, then, let me add to your present delight by saying that you may go play till doomsday, Dr. Marmion. Your work is done.'

'I do not understand.'

Her eyes were on me now with the directness she could so well use at need.

'I did not suppose you would, despite your many lessons at my hands. You have been altruistic, Dr. Marmion; I fear, critical people would say

that you meddled. I shall only say that you are inquiring—scientific, or feminine—what you please! . . . You can now yield up your portfolio of—foreign affairs—of war—shall I say? and retire into sedative habitations, which, believe me, you become best. . . . What concerns me need concern you no longer. The enemy retreats. She offers truce—without conditions. She retires. . . . Is that enough for even you, Professor Marmion?'

'Mrs. Falchion,' I said, finding it impossible to understand why she had so suddenly determined to go away (for I did not know all the truth until afterwards—some of it long afterwards), 'it is more than I dared to hope for, though less, I know, than you have heart to do if you willed so. I know that you hold some power over my friend.'

'Do not think,' she said, 'that you have had the least influence. What you might think, or may have intended to do, has not moved me in the least. I have had wrongs that you do not know. I have changed,—that is all. I admit I intended to do Galt Roscoe harm. I thought he deserved it. That is over. After to-night, it is not probable that we shall meet again. I hope that we shall not; as, doubtless, is your own mind.'

She kept looking at me with that new deep look which I had seen when she first entered the room.

I was moved, and I saw that just at the last she had spoken under considerable strain. 'Mrs. Falchion,' said I, 'I have *thought* harder things of you than I ever *said* to any one. Pray believe that, and believe, also, that I never tried to injure you. For the rest, I can make no complaint. You do not like me. I liked you once, and do now, when you do not depreciate yourself of purpose. . . . Pardon me, but I say this very humbly too. . . . I suppose I always shall like you, in spite of myself. You are one of the most gifted and fascinating women that I ever met. I have been anxious for my friend. I was concerned to make peace between you and your husband——'

'The man who *was* my husband,' she interrupted musingly.

'Your husband—whom you so cruelly treated. But I confess I have found it impossible to withhold admiration of you.'

For a long time she did not reply, but she never took her eyes off my face, as she leaned slightly forward. Then at last she spoke more gently than I had ever heard her, and a glow came upon her face.

'I am only human. You have me at advantage. What woman could reply unkindly to a speech like that? I admit I thought you held me utterly

bad and heartless, and it made me bitter. . . . I had no heart—once. I had only a wrong, an injury, which was in my mind; not mine, but another's, and yet mine. Then strange things occurred. . . . At last I relented. I saw that I had better go. Yesterday I saw that; and I am going—that is all. . . . I wished to keep the edge of my intercourse with you sharp and uncompanionable to the end; but you have forced me at my weakest point. . . .' Here she smiled somewhat painfully. . . . 'Believe me, that is the way to turn a woman's weapon upon herself. You have learned much since we first met. . . . Here is my hand in friendliness, if you care to take it; and in good-bye, should we not meet again more formally before I go.'

'I wish now that your husband, Boyd Madras, were here,' I said.

She answered nothing, but she did not resent it, only shuddered a little.

Our hands grasped silently. I was too choked to speak, and I left her. At that moment she blinded me to all her faults. She was a wonderful woman.

. . . . . .

Galt Roscoe had walked slowly along the forest-road towards the valley, his mind in that state of calm which, in some, might be thought

numbness of sensation, in others fortitude—the prerogative of despair. He came to the point of land jutting out over the valley, where he had stood with Mrs. Falchion, Justine, and myself, on the morning of Phil Boldrick's death.

He looked for a long time, and then, slowly descending the hillside, made his way to Mr. Devlin's office. He found Phil's pal awaiting him there. After a few preliminaries, the money was paid over, and Kilby said:

'I've been to see his camping-ground. It's right enough. Viking has done it noble. . . . Now, here's what I'm goin' to do: I'm goin' to open bottles for all that'll drink success to Viking. A place that's stood by my pal, I stand by,—but not with his money, mind you! No, that goes to you, Padre, for hospital purposes. My gift an' his. . . . So, sit down and write a receipt, or whatever it's called, accordin' to Hoyle, and you'll do me proud.'

Roscoe did as he requested, and handed the money over to Mr. Devlin for safe keeping, remarking, at the same time, that the matter should be announced on a bulletin outside the office at once.

As Kilby stood chewing the end of a cigar and listening to the brief conversation between Roscoe

and Mr. Devlin, perplexity crossed his face. He said, as Roscoe turned round: 'There's something catchy about your voice, Padre. I don't know what; but it's familiar like. You never was on the Panama level, of course?'

'Never.'

'Nor in Australia?'

'Yes, in 1876.'

'I wasn't there then.'

Roscoe grew a shade paler, but he was firm and composed. He was determined to answer truthfully any question that was asked him, wherever it might lead.

'Nor in Samoa?'

There was the slightest pause, and then the reply came:

'Yes, in Samoa.'

'Not a missionary, by gracious! Not a *mickonaree* in Samoa?'

'No.' He said nothing further. He did not feel bound to incriminate himself.

'No? Well you wasn't a beachcomber, nor trader, I'll swear. Was you there in the last half of the Seventies?—That's when I was there.'

'Yes.' The reply was quiet.

'By Jingo!' The man's face was puzzled. He was about to speak again; but at that moment

two river-drivers—boon companions, who had been hanging about the door—urged him to come to the tavern. This distracted him. He laughed, and said that he was coming, and then again, though with less persistency, questioned Roscoe. 'You don't remember me, I suppose?'

'No, I never saw you, so far as I know, until yesterday.'

'No? Still, I've heard your voice. It keeps swingin' in my ears; and I can't remember. . . . I can't remember! . . . But we'll have a spin about it again, Padre.' He turned to the impatient men. 'All right, bully-boys, I'm comin'.'

At the door he turned and looked again at Roscoe with a sharp, half-amused scrutiny, then the two parted.

Kilby kept his word. He was liberal to Viking; and Phil's memory was drunk, not in silence, many times that day. So that when, in the afternoon, he made up his mind to keep his engagement with Mrs. Falchion, and left the valley for the hills, he was not entirely sober. But he was apparently good-natured. As he idled along he talked to himself, and finally broke out into singing:—

> "'Then swing the long boat down the drink,
> For the lads as pipe to go;
> But I sink when the *Lovely Jane* does sink,
> To the mermaids down below."

'"The long boat bides on its strings," says we,
"An' we bides where the long boat bides;
An' we'll bluff this equatorial sea,
Or swallow its hurricane tides."

'But the *Lovely Jane* she didn't go down,
An' she anchored at the Spicy Isles;
An' she sailed again to Wellington Town—
A matter of a thousand miles.'

It will be remembered that this is part of the song sung by Galt Roscoe on the Whi-Whi River, the day we rescued Mrs. Falchion and Justine Caron. Kilby sang the whole song over to himself until he reached a point overlooking the valley. Then he stood silent for a time, his glance upon the town. The walk had sobered him a little. 'Phil, old pal,' he said at last, 'you ain't got the taste of raw whisky with you now. When a man loses a pal he loses a grip on the world equal to all that pal's grip was worth. . . . I'm drunk, and Phil's down there among the worms—among the worms! . . . Ah!' he added in disgust, and, dashing his hand across his eyes, struck off into the woods again, making his way to the summer hotel, where he had promised to meet Mrs. Falchion. He inquired for her, creating some astonishment by his uncouth appearance and unsteady manner.

He learned from Justine that Mrs. Falchion had gone to see Roscoe, and that he would probably

meet her if he went that way. This he did. He was just about to issue into a partly open space by a ravine near the house, when he heard voices, and his own name mentioned. He stilled and listened.

'Yes, Galt Roscoe,' said a voice, 'Sam Kilby is the man that loved Alo—loved her not as you did. He would have given her a home, have made her happy, perhaps. You, when Kilby was away, married her — in native fashion! — which is no marriage—and *killed* her.'

'No, no, not killed her! that is not so. As God is my Judge, that is not so.'

'You did not kill her with the knife? . . . Well, I will be honest now, and say that I believe that, whatever I may have hinted or said before. But you killed her just the same when you left her.'

'Mercy Falchion,' he said desperately, 'I will not try to palliate my sin. But still I must set myself right with you in so far as I can. The very night Alo killed herself I had made up my mind to leave the navy. I was going to send in my papers, and come back to Apia, and marry her as Englishmen are married. While I remained in the navy I could not, as you know, marry her. It would be impossible to an English officer. I intended to come back and be regularly married to her.'

'You say that now,' was the cold reply.

'But it is the truth, the truth indeed. Nothing that you might say could make me despise myself more than I do; but I have told you all, as I shall have to tell it one day before a just God. You have spared me: He will not.'

'Galt Roscoe,' she replied, 'I am not merciful, nor am I just. I intended to injure you, though you will remember I saved your life that night by giving you a boat for escape across the bay to the *Porcupine*, which was then under way. The band on board, you also remember, was playing the music of *La Grande Duchesse*. You fired on the natives who followed. Well, Sam Kilby was with them. Your brother officers did not know the cause of the trouble. It was not known to any one in Apia exactly who it was that Kilby and the natives had tracked from Alo's hut.'

He drew his hand across his forehead dazedly.

'Oh yes, I remember!' he said. 'I would to God I had faced the matter there and then! It would have been better.'

'I doubt that,' she replied. 'The natives who saw you coming from Alo's hut did not know you. You wisely came straight to the Consul's office—my father's house. And I helped you, though Alo, half-caste Alo, was—my sister!'

Roscoe started back. 'Alo—your—sister!' he exclaimed in horror.

'Yes, though I did not know it till afterwards, not till just before my father died. Alo's father was my father; and her mother had been honestly married to my father by a missionary; though, for my sake, it had never been made known. You remember, also, that you carried on your relations with Alo secretly, and my father never suspected it was you.'

'Your sister!' Roscoe was white and sick.

'Yes. And now you understand my reason for wishing you ill, and for hating you to the end.'

'Yes,' he said despairingly, 'I see.'

She was determined to preserve before him the outer coldness of her nature to the last.

'Let us reckon together,' she said. 'I helped to—in fact, I saved your life at Apia. You helped to save my life at the Devil's Slide. That is balanced. You did me—the honour to say that you loved me once. Well, one of my race loved you. That is balanced also. My sister's death came through you. There is no balance to that. What shall balance Alo's death? . . . I leave you to think that over. It is worth thinking about. I shall keep your secret too. Kilby does not know you. I doubt that he ever saw you, though, as I

said, he followed you with the natives that night in Apia. He was to come to see me to-day. I think I intended to tell him all, and shift—the duty—of punishment on his shoulders, which I do not doubt he would fulfil. But he shall not know. Do not ask why. I have changed my mind, that is all. But still the account remains a long one. You will have your lifetime to reckon with it, free from any interference on my part; for, if I can help it, we shall never meet again in this world—never! . . . And now, good-bye!'

Without a gesture of farewell she turned and left him standing there, in misery and bitterness, but in a thankfulness too, more for Ruth's sake than his own. He raised his arms with a despairing motion, then let them drop heavily to his side. . . .

And then two strong hands caught his throat, a body pressed hard against him, and he was borne backwards—backwards—to the cliff!

CHAPTER XX.

AFTER THE STORM.

I WAS sitting on the verandah, writing a letter to Belle Treherne. The substantial peace of a mountain evening was on me. The air was clear, and full of the scent of the pines and cedars, and the rumble of the rapids came musically down the cañon. I lifted my head and saw an eagle sailing away to the snow-topped peak of Trinity, and then turned to watch the orioles in the trees. The hour was delightful. It made me feel how grave mere living is, how noble even the meanest of us becomes sometimes—in those big moments when we think the world was built for us. It is half egotism, half divinity; but why quarrel with it?

I was young, ambitious; and Love and I were at that moment the only figures in the universe really deserving attention! I looked on down a lane of cedars before me, seeing in imagination a long procession of pleasant things; of—— As

I looked, another procession moved through the creatures of my dreams, so that they shrank away timidly, then utterly, and this new procession came on and on, until—I suddenly rose, and started forward fearfully, to see—unhappy reality!—the body of Galt Roscoe carried towards me.

Then a cold wind seemed to blow from the glacier above, and killed all the summer. A man whispered to me: 'We found him at the bottom of the ravine yonder. He'd fallen over, I suppose.'

I felt his heart. 'He is not dead,' I said. 'Thank God!'

'No, sir,' said the other, 'but he's all smashed.'

They brought him in and laid him on his bed. I sent one of the party for the doctor at Viking, and myself set to work, with what appliances I had, to deal with the dreadful injuries. When the doctor came, together we made him into the semblance of a man again. His face was but slightly injured, though his head had received severe hurts. I think that I alone saw the marks on his throat; and I hid them. I guessed the cause, but held my peace.

I had sent round at once to James Devlin (but asked him not to come till morning), and also to Mrs. Falchion; but I begged her not to come at all. I might have spared her that; for, as I after-

wards knew, she had no intention of coming. She had learned of the accident on her way to Viking, and had turned back; but only to wait and know the worst or the best.

About midnight I was left alone with Roscoe. Once, earlier in the evening, he had recognised me and smiled faintly, but I had shaken my head, and he had said nothing. Now, however, he was looking at me earnestly. I did not speak. What he had to tell me was best told in his own time.

At last he said faintly,—'Marmion, shall I die soon?'

I knew that frankness was best, and I replied: 'I can not tell, Roscoe. There is a chance of your living.'

He moved his head sadly. 'A very faint chance?'

'Yes, a faint one, but——'

'Yes? "But"?' He looked at me as though he wished it over.

'But it rests with you whether the chance is worth anything. If you are content to die, it is gone.'

'I am content to die,' he replied.

'And there,' said I, 'you are wrong and selfish. You have Ruth to live for. Besides, if you are

given the chance, you commit suicide if you do not take it.'

There was a long pause, and then he said: 'You are right; I will live if I can, Marmion.'

'And now *you* are right.' I nodded soothingly to him, and then asked him to talk no more; for I knew that fever would soon come on.

He lay for a moment silent, but at length whispered: 'Did you know it was not a fall I had?' He raised his chin, and stretched his throat slightly, with a kind of trembling.

'I thought it was not a fall,' I replied.

'It was Phil's pal—Kilby.'

'I thought that.'

'How could you — think it? Did — others— think—so?' he asked anxiously.

'No, not others; I alone. They thought it accident; they could have no ground for suspicion. But I had; and, besides, there were marks on your throat.'

'Nothing must happen to him, you understand. He had been drinking, and—and he was justified. I wronged him in Samoa, him and Mrs. Falchion.'

I nodded and put my fingers on my lips.

Again there was silence. I sat and watched him, his eyes closed, his body was motionless. He

slept for hours so, and then he waked rather sharply, and said half deliriously,—'I could have dragged him with me, Marmion.'

'But you did not. Yes, I understand. Go to sleep again, Roscoe.'

Later on the fever came, and he moaned and moved his head about his pillow. He could not move his body,—it was too much injured.

There was a source of fear in Kilby. Would he recklessly announce what he had done, and the cause of it? After thinking it over and over, I concluded that he would not disclose his crimes. My conclusions were right, as after events showed.

As for Roscoe, I feared that if he lived he must go through life maimed. He had a private income; therefore if he determined to work no more in the ministry, he would, at least, have the comforts of life.

Ruth Devlin came. I went to Roscoe and told him that she wished to see him. He smiled sorrowfully and said: 'To what end, Marmion? I am a drifting wreck. It will only shock her.' I think he thought she would not love him now if he lived—a crippled man.

'But is this noble? Is it just to her?' said I.

After a long time he answered: 'You are right again, quite right. I am selfish. When one is

shaking between life and death, one thinks most of one's self.'

'She will help to bring you back from those places, Roscoe.'

'If I am delirious ever, do not let her come, will you, Marmion? Promise me that.' I promised.

I went to her. She was very calm and womanly. She entered the room, went quietly to his bedside, and, sitting down, took his hand. Her smile was pitiful and anxious, but her words were brave.

'Galt, dear,' she said, 'I am sorry. But you will soon be well, so we must be as patient and cheerful as we can.'

His eyes answered, but he did not speak. She leaned over and kissed his cheek. Then he said: 'I hope I may get well.'

'This was the shadow over you,' she ventured. 'This was your presentiment of trouble — this accident.'

'Yes, this was the shadow.'

Some sharp thought seemed to move her, for her eyes grew suddenly hard, and she stooped and whispered: 'Was *she* there—when—it happened, Galt?'

He shrank from the question, but he said immediately,—'No, she was not there.'

'I am glad,' she added, 'that it was only an accident.'

Her eyes grew clear of their momentary hardness. There is nothing in life like the anger of one woman against another concerning a man.

Justine Caron came to the house, pale and anxious, to inquire. Mrs. Falchion, she said, was not going away until she knew how Mr. Roscoe's illness would turn.

'Miss Caron,' I said to her, 'do you not think it better that she should go?'

'Yes, for him; but she grieves now.'

'For him?'

'Not alone for him,' was the reply. There was a pause, and then she continued: 'Madame told me to say to you that she did not wish Mr. Roscoe to know that she was still here.'

I assured her that I understood, and then she added mournfully: 'I cannot help you now, monsieur, as I did on board the *Fulvia*. But he will be better cared for in Miss Devlin's hands, the poor lady! . . . Do you think that he will live?'

'I hope so. I am not sure'

Her eyes went to tears; and then I tried to speak more encouragingly.

All day people came to inquire; chief among

them Mr. Devlin, whose big heart split itself in humanity and compassion. 'The price of the big mill for the guarantee of his life!' he said over and over again. 'We can't afford to let him go.'

Although I should have been on my way back to Toronto, I determined to stay until Roscoe was entirely out of danger. It was singular, but in this illness, though the fever was high, he never was delirious. It would almost seem as if, having paid his penalty, the brain was at rest.

While Roscoe hovered between life and death, Mr. Devlin, who persisted that he would not die, was planning for a new hospital and a new church, of which Roscoe should be president and padre respectively. But the suspense to us all, for many days, was very great; until, one morning when the birds were waking the cedars, and the snow on Mount Trinity was flashing coolness down the hot valley, he waked and said to me: 'Marmion, old friend, it is morning at last.'

'Yes, it is morning,' said I. 'And you are going to live now? You are going to be reasonable and give the earth another chance?'

'Yes, I believe I shall live now.'

To cheer him, I told him what Mr. Devlin intended and had planned; how river-drivers and salmon-fishers came every day from the valley to

inquire after him. I did not tell him that there had been one or two disturbances between the river-drivers and the salmon-fishers. I tried to let him see that there need be no fresh change in his life. At length he interrupted me.

'Marmion,' he said, 'I understand what you mean. It would be cowardly of me to leave here now if I were a whole man. I am true in intention, God knows, but I must carry a crippled arm for the rest of my life, must I not? . . . and a crippled Padre is not the kind of man for this place. They want men straight on their feet.'

'Do you think,' I answered, 'that they will not be able to stand the test? You gave them—shall I say it?—a crippled mind before; you give them a crippled body now. Well, where do you think the odds lie? I should fancy with you as you are.'

There was a long silence in which neither of us moved. At last he turned his face towards the window, and not looking at me, said lingeringly: 'This is a pleasant place.'

I knew that he would remain.

I had not seen Mrs. Falchion during Roscoe's illness; but every day Justine came and inquired, or a messenger was sent. And when, this fortunate day, Justine herself came, and I told her that the

crisis was past, she seemed infinitely relieved and happy. Then she said:

'Madame has been ill these three days, also; but now I think she will be better; and we shall go soon.'

'Ask her,' said I, 'not to go yet for a few days. Press it as a favour to me.' Then, on second thought, I sat down and wrote Mrs. Falchion a note, hinting that there were grave reasons why she should stay a little longer: things connected with her own happiness. Truth is, I had received a note that morning which had excited me. It referred to Mrs. Falchion. For I was an arch-plotter—or had been.

I received a note in reply which said that she would do as I wished. Meanwhile I was anxiously awaiting the arrival of some one.

That night a letter came to Roscoe. After reading it shrinkingly he handed it to me. It said briefly:—

'I'm not sorry I did it, but I'm glad I hevn't killed you. I was drunk and mad. If I hadn't hurt you, I'd never hev forgive myself. I reckon now, there's no need to do any forgivin' either side. We're square—though maybe you didn't kill her after all. Mrs. Falchion says you didn't. But you hurt her. Well, I've hurt you. And you will never hear no more of Phil's pal from Danger Mountain.'

Immediately after sunset of this night, a storm

swept suddenly down the mountains, and prevented Ruth and her father from going to Viking. I left them talking to Roscoe, he wearing such a look on his face as I like to remember now, free from distress of mind—so much more painful than distress of body. As I was leaving the room, I looked back and saw Ruth sitting on a stool beside Roscoe's chair, holding the unmaimed hand in hers; the father's face shining with pleasure and pride. Before I went out, I turned again to look at them, and, as I did so, my eye fell on the window against which the wind and rain were beating. And through the wet there appeared a face, shocking in its paleness and misery—the face of Mrs. Falchion. Only for an instant, and then it was gone.

I opened the door and went out upon the verandah. As I did so, there was a flash of lightning, and in that flash a figure hurried by me. One moment, and there was another flash; and I saw the figure in the beating rain, making towards the precipice.

Then I heard a cry, not loud, but full of entreaty and sorrow. I moved quickly towards it. In another white gleam I saw Justine with her arms about the figure, holding it back from the abyss. She said with incredible pleading:

'No, no, madame! not that! It is wicked—wicked!'

I came and stood beside them.

The figure sank upon the ground, and buried a pitiful face in the wet grass.

Justine leaned over her.

She sobbed as one whose harvest of the past is all tears. Nothing human could comfort her yet.

I think she did not know that I was there. Justine lifted her face to me, appealing.

I turned and stole silently away.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN PORT.

THAT night I could not rest. It was impossible to rid myself of the picture of Mrs. Falchion as I had seen her by the precipice in the storm. What I had dared to hope for had come. She had been awakened; and with the awakening had risen a new understanding of her own life and the lives of others. The storm of wind and rain that had swept down the ravine was not wilder than her passions when I left her with Justine in the dark night.

All had gone well where the worst might have been. Roscoe's happiness was saved to him. He felt that the accident to him was the penalty he paid for the error of his past: but in the crash of penalties Mrs. Falchion, too, was suffering; and, so far as she knew, must carry with her the remorse of having seen, without mercy, her husband sink to a suicide's grave. I knew that she was

paying a great price now for a mistaken past. I wished that I might make her remorse and sorrow less. There was a way, but I was not sure that all would be as I wished. Since a certain dreadful day on the *Fulvia*, Hungerford and I had held a secret in our hands. When it seemed that Mrs. Falchion would bring a great trouble and shame into Roscoe's life, I determined to use the secret. It must be used now only for Mrs. Falchion's good. As I said in the last chapter, I had received word that somebody was coming whose presence must take a large place in the drama of these events: and I hoped the best.

Until morning I lay and planned the best way to bring things to a successful issue. The morning came—beautiful after a mad night. Soon after I got up I received a note, brought by a boy from Viking, which gave me a thrill of excitement. The note requested me to go to Sunburst. But first I sent a note to Mrs. Falchion, begging her in the name of our new friendship not to leave the mountains that day. I also asked that she would meet me in Sunburst that evening at eight o'clock, at a place indicated by me. I asked for a reply by the messenger I sent, and urged her to ask no questions, but to trust me as one who only wished to do her a great service, as I hoped her compli-

ance would make possible. I waited for the reply, and it bore but the one word—'Yes.'

Greatly pleased, I started down the valley. It was still early when I reached Sunburst. I went directly to the little tavern from whence the note had come, and remained an hour or more. The result of that hour's conversation with the writer of the note was memorable, as was the hour itself. I began to hope fondly for the success of my scheme.

From the tavern I went to the village, with an elation hardly disturbed by the fact that many of the salmon-fishers were sullen, because of foolish depredations committed the evening before by idle river-men and mill-hands of Viking. Had I not been so occupied with Mrs. Falchion and an event wherein she must figure, I should have taken more seriously the mutterings of the half-breeds, the moroseness of the Indians, and the nervous threatenings of the white fishers: the more so because I knew that Mr. Devlin had started early that morning for the Pacific Coast, and would not be back for some days.

No two classes of people could be more unlike than the salmon-fishers of Sunburst and the mill-hands and river-drivers of Viking. The life of the river-men was exciting, hardy, and perilous; tending to boisterousness, recklessness, daring, and wild

humour: that of the salmon-fishers was cheerful, picturesque, infrequently dangerous, mostly simple and quiet. The river-driver chose to spend his idle hours in crude, rough sprightliness: the salmon-fisher loved to lie upon the shore and listen to the village story-teller,—almost official when successful,—who played upon the credulity and imagination of his listeners. The river-driver loved excitement for its own sake, and behind his boisterousness there was little evil. When the salmon-fisher was roused, his anger became desperately serious. It was not his practice to be boisterous for the sake of boisterousness.

All this worked for a crisis.

From Sunburst I went over to Viking, and for a time watched a handful of river-drivers upon a little island in the centre of the river, working to loosen some logs and timber and foist them into the water, to be driven down to the mill. I stood interested, because I had nothing to do of any moment for a couple of hours. I asked an Indian on the bank to take his canoe and paddle me over to the island. He did so. I do not know why I did not go alone; but the Indian was near me, his canoe was at his hand, and I did the thing almost mechanically. I landed on the island and watched with great interest the men as they pried, twisted,

and tumbled the pile to get at the key-log which, found and loosened, would send the heap into the water.

I was sorry I brought the Indian with me, for though the river-drivers stopped their wild sing-song cry for a moment to call a 'How!' at me, they presently began to toss jeering words at the Indian. They had recognised him—I had not—as a salmon-fisher and one of the Siwash tribe from Sunburst. He remained perfectly silent, but I could see sullenness growing on his face. He appeared to take no notice of his scornful entertainers, but, instead of edging away, came nearer and nearer to the tangle of logs—came, indeed, very close to me, as I stood watching four or five men, with the foreman close by, working at a huge timber. At a certain moment the foreman was in a kind of hollow. Just behind him, near to the Indian, was a great log, which, if loosened by a slight impulse, must fall into the hollow where the foreman stood. The foreman had his face to us; the backs of the other men were on us. Suddenly the foreman gave a frightened cry, and I saw at the same instant the Indian's foot thrust out upon the big log. Before the foreman had time to get out of the hollow, it slid down, caught him just above the ankle and broke the leg.

I wheeled, to see the Indian in his canoe making for the shore. He was followed by the curses of the foreman and the gang. The foreman was very quiet, but I could see that there was danger in his eye, and the exclamations of the men satisfied me that they were planning an intermunicipal difficulty.

I improvised bandages, set the leg directly, and in a little while we got to the shore on a hastily-constructed raft. After seeing the foreman safely cared for, and giving Mr. Devlin's manager the facts of the occurrence, more than sated with my morning's experience, I climbed the mountain-side, and took refuge from the heat in the coolness of Roscoe's rooms.

In the afternoon I received a note from Mrs. Falchion, saying that on the following day she would start for the coast; that her luggage would be taken to Sunburst at once; and that, her engagement with me fulfilled, she would spend a night there, not returning again to the hills. I was preparing for my own departure, and was kept very busy until evening. Then I went quickly down into the valley, — for I was late, — and trudged eagerly on to Sunburst. As I neared the village I saw that there were fewer lights— torches and fires — than usual on the river. I

noticed also that there were very few fishers on the banks or in the river. But still the village seemed noisy, and, although it was dusk, I could make out much stir in the one street along which the cottages and huts ambled for nearly a mile.

All at once it came to me strongly that the friction between the two villages had consummated in the foreman's injury, and was here coming to a painful crisis. My suspicions had good grounds. As I hurried on I saw that the lights usually set on the banks of the river were scattered through the town. Bonfires were being lighted, and torches were flaring in front of the Indian huts. Coming closer, I saw excited groups of Indians, half-breeds, and white men moving here and there; and then, all at once, there came a cry—a kind of roar—from farther up the village, and the men gathered themselves together, seizing guns, sticks, irons, and other weapons, and ran up the street. I understood. I was moderately swift of foot those days. I came quickly after them, and passed them. As I did so I inquired of one or two fishers what was the trouble. They told me, as I had guessed, that they expected an attack on the village by the mill-hands and river-drivers of Viking.

The situation was critical. I could foresee a catastrophe which would for ever unsettle the two

towns, and give the valley an unenviable reputation. I was certain that, if Roscoe or Mr. Devlin were present, a prohibitive influence could be brought to bear; that some one of strong will could stand, as it were, in the gap between them, and prevent a pitched battle, and, possibly, bloodshed. I was sure that at Viking the river-drivers had laid their plans so secretly that the news of them would scarcely reach the ears of the manager of the mill, and that, therefore, his influence, as Mr. Devlin's, would not be available.

Remained only myself—as I first thought. I was unknown to a great number of the men of both villages, and familiar with but very few,—chiefly those with whom I had a gossiping acquaintance. Yet, somehow, I felt that if I could but get a half-dozen men to take a firm stand with me, I might hold the rioters in check.

As I ran by the side of the excitable fishers, I urged upon one or two of them the wisdom and duty of preventing a conflict. Their reply was—and it was very convincing—that they were not forcing a struggle, but were being attacked, and in the case would fight. My hasty persuasion produced but little result. But I kept thinking hard. Suddenly it came to me that I could place my hand upon a man whose instincts in the matter

would be the same as mine; who had authority; knew the world; had been in dangerous positions in his lifetime; and owed me something. I was sure that I could depend upon him: the more so that once frail of body he had developed into a strong, well-controlled man.

Even as I thought of him, I was within a few rods of the house where he was. I looked, and saw him standing in the doorway. I ran and called to him. He instantly joined me, and we ran on together: the fishermen shouting loudly as they watched the river-drivers come armed down the hill-slope into the village.

I hastily explained the situation to my friend, and told him what we must do. A word or two assured me of all I wished to know. We reached the scene of the disorder. The fishermen were bunched together, the river on the one side, the houses and hills on the other. The river-drivers had halted not many yards away, cool, determined and quiet, save for a little muttering. In their red shirts, top boots, many of them with long black hair and brass earrings, they looked a most formidable crowd. They had evidently taken the matter seriously, and were come with the intention of carrying their point, whatever it might be. Just as we reached the space between the two parties,

the massive leader of the river-drivers stepped forward, and in a rough but collected voice said that they had come determined to fight, if fighting were necessary, but that they knew what the end of the conflict would be, and they did not wish to obliterate Sunburst entirely if Sunburst accepted the conditions of peace.

There seemed no leader to the fishermen.

My friend said to me quickly,—'You speak first.'

Instantly I stepped forward and demanded to know what the terms of peace were. As soon as I did so, there were harsh mutterings among the river-drivers. I explained at once, waving back some of the fishermen who were clamouring about me, that I had nothing whatever to do with the quarrel; that I happened to be where I was by accident, as I had happened by accident to see the difficulty of the morning. But I said that it was the duty of every man who was a good citizen and respected the laws of his country, to see, in so far as it was possible, that there should be no breach of those laws. I spoke in a clear strong voice, and I think I produced some effect upon both parties to the quarrel. The reply of the leader was almost immediate. He said that all they demanded was the Indian who had so treacherously injured the foreman of their gangs. I saw the position at once,

and was dumfounded. For a moment I did not speak.

I was not prepared for the scene that immediately followed. Some one broke through the crowd at my back, rushed past me, and stood between the two forces. It was the Indian who had injured the foreman. He was naked to the waist, and painted and feathered after the manner of his tribe going to battle. There was a wild light in his eye, but he had no weapon. He folded his arms across his breast, and said:

'Well, you want me. Here I am. I will fight with any man all alone, without a gun or arrow or anything. I will fight with my arms—to kill.'

I saw revolvers raised at him instantly, but at that the man, my friend, who stood beside me, sprang in front of the Indian.

'Stop! stop!' he said. 'In the name of the law! I am a sergeant of the mounted police of Canada. My jurisdiction extends from Winnipeg to Vancouver. You cannot have this man except over my body: and for my body every one of you will pay with your lives; for every blow struck this night, there will be a hundred blows struck upon the river-drivers and mill-hands of this valley. Beware! Behind me is the law of the land—her police and her soldiery.'

He paused. There was almost complete silence. He continued:

'This man is my prisoner; I arrest him.'—He put his hand upon the Indian's shoulder.—'For the crime he committed this morning he shall pay: but to the law, not to you. Put up your revolvers, men. Go back to Viking. Don't risk your lives; don't break the law and make yourselves criminals and outlaws. Is it worth it? Be men. You have been the aggressors. There isn't one of you but feels that justice which is the boast of every man of the West. You wanted to avenge the crime of this morning. But the vengeance is the law's.—Stand back!—Stand back!' he said, and drew his revolver, as the leader of the river-drivers stepped forward. 'I will kill the first man that tries to lay his hand upon my prisoner. Don't be mad. I am not one man, I am a whole country.'

I shall never forget the thrill that passed through me as I saw a man who, but a handful of months before was neck deep in his grave, now blossomed out into a strong, defiant soldier.

There was a pause. At last the leader of the river-drivers spoke. 'See,' he said, 'Sergeant, I guess you're right. You're a man, so help me God! Say, boys,' he continued, turning to his followers, 'let him have the Injin. I guess he 's earned him.'

So saying he wheeled, the men with him, and they tramped up the slope again on their way back to Viking. The man who had achieved this turned upon the fishers.

'Back to your homes!' he said. 'Be thankful that blood was not shed here to-night, and let this be a lesson to you. Now, go!'

The crowd turned, slowly shambled down the river-side, and left us three standing there.

But not alone. Out of the shadow of one of the houses came two women. They stepped forward into the light of the bonfire burning near us. One of the women was very pale.

It was Mrs. Falchion.

I touched the arm of the man standing beside me. He wheeled and saw her also. A cry broke from his lips, but he stood still. A whole life-time of sorrow, trouble, and love looked out of his eyes. Mrs. Falchion came nearer. Clasping her hands upon her breast, she peered up into his face, and gasped:

'Oh—oh—I thought that you were drowned—and dead! I saw you buried in the sea. No—no—it cannot be you!—I have heard and seen all within these past few minutes. *You* are so strong and brave, so great a man! . . . Oh, tell me, tell me, and save me from the horror of my remorse and shame: are you my husband?'

He spoke.

'I was your husband, Mercy Falchion. I was drowned, but this man'—he turned and touched my shoulder—'this man brought me back to life. I wanted to be dead to the world. I begged him to keep my secret. A sailor's corpse was buried in my shroud, and I lived. At Aden I stole from the boat in the night. I came to America—to Canada—to begin a new life under a new name, never to see you again. . . . Do not, do not speak to me—unless I am not to lose you again; unless I am to know that now you forgive me—that you forgive me—and wish me to live—my wife!'

She put both her hands out, a strange sorrowful look in her eyes, and said: 'I have sinned—I have sinned.'

He took her hands in his.

'I know,' he said, 'that you do not love me yet; but you may some day.'

'No,' she said, 'I do not love you; but . . . . I am glad you live. Let us—go home.'